

LAMBTON SHORES TOURISM REPORT 2013



2/26/2014

Partnership for Growth

The Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce provides Tourism & Visitor Services to the Municipality of Lambton Shores – this report is a summary of 2013 activities and highlights.

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Lambton Shores Tourism Report 2013

TOURISM – PRIMARY ECONOMIC DRIVER FOR LAMBTON SHORES

2013 TOURISM SEASON

At the beginning of the 2013 tourism year, the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (OTMPC) released a report identifying challenges to tourism as continued decreases in border crossings from the USA, currency rate exchanges and parity – specifically to the US and Canadian dollar. It stated in this “economic environment it’s critical to manage priorities and investments based on an understanding of short-term travel intentions and appreciation of the nature of perceived strengths and weaknesses of the product offering” (source: Travel Intentions Study, February 2013).

The report went on to state that Ontario’s appeal was stable, but progress was uneven geographically and that for the most part “tourism regions” were not clearly defined or fully understood by travelers.¹ In addition, trip bookings were often left to the last minute, as many of our own accommodation providers can attest. On the flipside, a number of consumer segments were identified as showing growth potential, namely “Explorer²” and Knowledge Seeker³” groups.

¹ Based on a 2009 report, Ontario created 13 tourism regions (RTO) in 2010. Each RTO was to be an independent, industry-led, not-for-profit organization that would in turn provide leadership and support to the tourism region it managed. Initial projects were to focus on websites, marketing campaigns, promotion and product development studies (source: Ontario Tourism Regions, May 2, 2011).

On a more local footing, the creation of RTOs has meant an additional level of stakeholders with whom we have needed to work with in ensuring the *Grand Bend Area* is represented. Unfortunately, the creation of the RTOs paid little attention to naturally occurring connections and relationships and consequently, part of this area’s attractions such as Huron Country Playhouse, Oakwood Resort, and Grand Bend Motorplex are considered part of RTO 4 (Huron, Perth, Waterloo & Wellington counties) and other attractions such as Grand Bend’s Main Beach, Ipperwash Beach, Pinery Provincial Park, Lambton Heritage Museum and Rock Glen Conservation Area are considered as RTO1/Southwest Ontario.

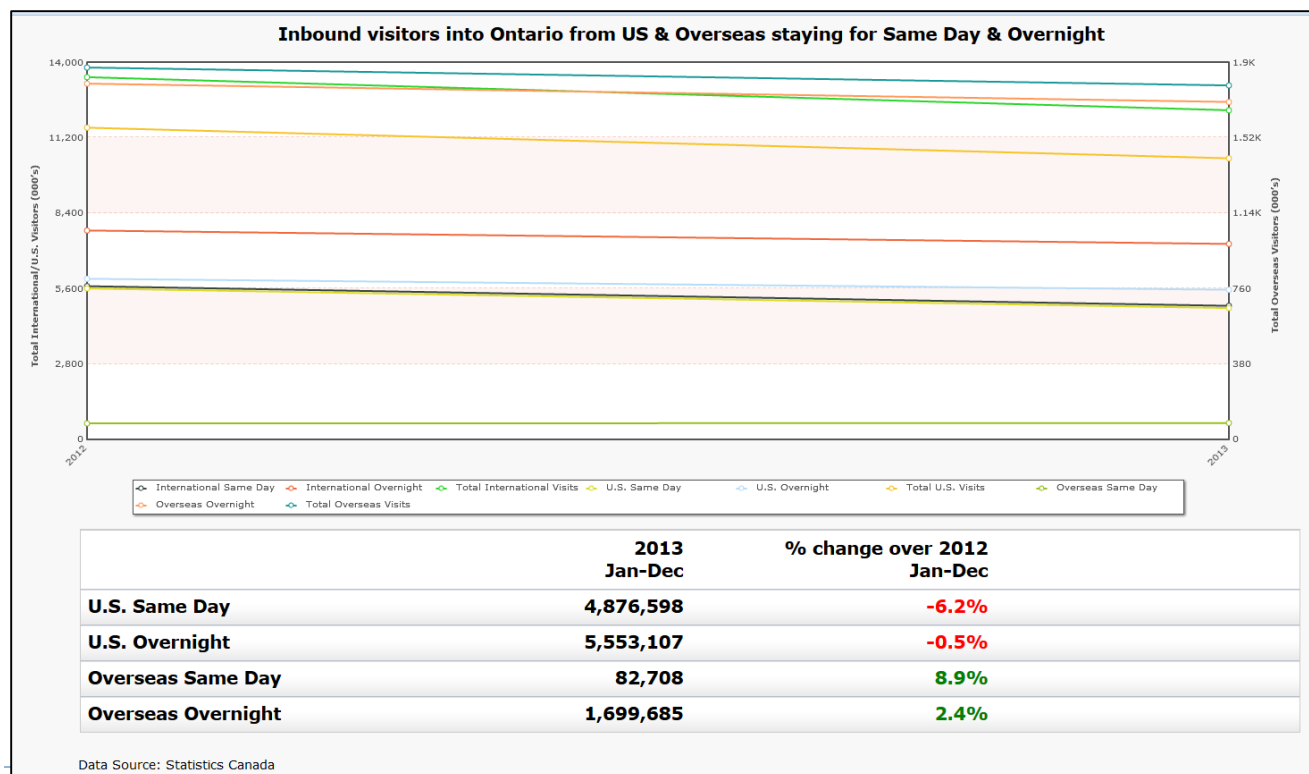
² **Connected Explorers:** primarily couples aged 18-34 years without children. Confident, youthful and optimistic. Travel to expose themselves to new experiences. Use technology at all phases of researching, booking, planning and sharing travel experiences. **Up & Coming Explorers:** young families; aged 18-34 with children. Diverse background (visible minority/immigrant). Travel is an opportunity to learn and explore as a nuclear family; travel experiences start with what is nearby and typically considered a “core” tourist attraction (i.e. parks, zoo, aquarium).

³ **Knowledge Seekers:** couples in or nearing retirement, aged 55+ with higher income. Empty nesters with time and money to travel. Looking to understand the places they visit – history, art and culture. Travel is about expanding knowledge and stimulating the mind.

The OTMPC has a number of tourist touch points – the 1-800-Ontario phone number, the OntarioTravel.net website and the Travel Information Centres (enRoute). Inquiries to 800-Ontario over the last year decreased by 15% and visits to the website decreased by 8.5%, however in-person visitors to the enRoute Centres increased by 3.7%. The increase in visits to the enRoute Centres could be explained by the closure of many of Ontario's travel information centres in 2012 for renovation with their re-opening occurring at various times during 2013.

We heard a mixed bag of seasonal reports from local businesses, from those that said the 2013 peak season (May through to end of August) was much like previous years, to those that were busier and those that were slower. It is likely what we are experiencing as an area is reflective of the change in demographics of the travelling public. With increased driving restrictions on young drivers (over the last decade) combined with relatively high insurance costs for the same group, there's a systemic restraint on what was once considered Grand Bend's core tourist group (i.e. adult teenagers to young 20-somethings) when compared with the largest travelling segment today, being those aged 55-years plus. OTMPC's research identifies three segments that show potential for an increase in travel activity, identified as being "Connected Explorers", "Up & Coming Explorers" and "Knowledge Seekers". The product offering that appeals to these segments is very different from the Grand Bend tourist of 20 or 30 years ago. Businesses need to examine their own product mix to determine if they still appeal to the majority of the travelling public. In other words, the demographics have changed – has local business made the change as well?

OTMPC's statistical tracking for 2013 in comparison to 2012 reinforces what local businesses already suspect. Overall, same day and overnight visits from the US are down, whereas overseas visits are up. The continued poor economy in the closest US state to Lambton Shores (Michigan) affects our area's tourism results. The slack has been taken up by Ontario residents choosing to vacation in their own backyard, but plant closures and job losses in our biggest urban draw centres such as London, Sarnia and Kitchener-Waterloo reinforces the area's slowness in returning to pre-2008 tourist spending levels. And those Ontarians that are travelling are tending to be conservative in their spending habits.



HOW DOES TOURISM BENEFIT LAMBTON SHORES

Over 2 million people visit Lambton County annually. Of those, 985,000 do so for vacation/pleasure and another 769,000 do so to visit friends and family. Total visitor spending for the County is almost \$178-million (\$177,748,116.17).

- 64% stay overnight
- 36% same-day visits
- \$62.7-million is spent on food & beverage
- \$34.5-million is spent on retail & shopping
- \$32.4-million is spent on transportation
- \$28.3-million is spent on recreation & entertainment
- \$22.6-million is spent on accommodation

Since StatsCan collects data based on census regions, we are unable to break that figure down for Lambton Shores alone, what follows are some attendance figures for local popular attractions and events.

- 600,000 people visit Pinery Provincial Park each year
- 60,000 patrons attend the Grand Bend Motorplex events
- 60,000 patrons attend Huron Country Playhouse
- 23,000 people attend Canada Day in Grand Bend
- 11,642 people are helped by our Welcome Centre
- 10,451 folks visit Lambton Heritage Museum
- 7,000 frequent Grand Bend's Farmers' Market
- 2,700 attend the Arts, Eats & Beats Studio Tour
- 1,000 people go to Aquafest
- 816 bird enthusiasts attend Return of the Tundra Swans
- 750 attend Winter Carnival
- 500 visit the Forest Garden Show

Economic Contributions

- Based on the 11,642 inquiries the Welcome Centre handles annually, OTMPC's TRIEM calculator estimates the **Welcome Centre in Grand Bend** is responsible for \$1.5-million of tourist spending in terms of accommodation, food, retail, transportation/gas and area attractions!
- Huron County Playhouse (13-week summer season) accounts for \$14-million of visitor spending.
- Grand Bend Motorplex's 60,000 patrons account for \$10.8 million of local visitor spending.
- Pinery Provincial Park's 600,000 visitors accounts for \$13.7-million of local spending

HOW ARE TOURISM SERVICES PROVIDED TO LAMBTON COUNTY

Three levels of tourism services involved. The purpose and scope of each level are defined by the geographic area it serves.

1. **Regional Level - Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation** (swotc.ca / ontariosouthwest.com). Established 2011. Tagline – “*Shaped by Nature*”. Located: Woodstock, Ontario. Organization seeks to provide access to information, link tourism assets across county lines and offer a value proposition that benefits the region through increased tourism business. SWOTC’s priority “themed clusters” form the basis of its tourism services development and promotion:



- a. **Primary Focus:** Winery / Culinary; Motorcycling, Festivals, Waterfront
- b. **Secondary Focus:** Birding, Cycling, Agri-Tourism, Camping

Funding Model: Provincial Government

Focus: Region-wide

2. **County Level – Tourism Sarnia Lambton** (tourismsarnialambton.com). Established 2000. Tagline – “*Navigate to Great Times in Lambton County.*” Located: Sarnia, Ontario. Destination marketing organization for the County. TSL seeks to bring more people to the area, get them to stay longer, spend more money and ensure their experience will bring them back. It works to enhance the county’s tourism industry by fostering partnerships that grow tourism through programs, ideas and initiatives that result in greater tax revenue for Sarnia-Lambton municipalities. Lead and assist tourism partners. Establish a unified brand. Grow sustainable, long-term funding to TSL and its destination marketing and management initiatives.



Funding Model: Mixed – Government & Advertising revenues.

Focus: County-wide

3. **Municipal Level – Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce**⁴ (grandbendtourism.com). Established 1957. Tagline – “*It starts at the beach.*” Located: Grand Bend, Ontario. Since amalgamation, the Chamber has leveraged the century-old and well-known “brand” of the Grand Bend Area to promote all of Lambton Shores in its efforts to increase tourism revenues, to provide local visitor services for the benefit of the entire community and to partner/support community groups whose activities contribute to the area’s attractiveness to out-of-area visitors and local residents. It works to highlight the variety of things to do, places to see, where to eat, where to shop and access services throughout Lambton Shores.



⁴ Organizational capabilities of the Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce include a general manager with 24+ years of print, web and electronic marketing and communications experience; long-term local volunteers; Board of Directors with established, successful businesses reflective of the industry-mix in Lambton Shores; proven tourism and visitor services experience and track record and demonstrated commitment.

Funding Model: Mixed – Government, Chamber Membership Fees & Advertising revenues.

Focus: Lambton Shores

TRAVEL TRIGGERS - WHY PEOPLE TRAVEL

Other than the obvious reason, to escape the mundane, research shows there are very definite reasons why people get into their car and drive out of their immediate area to effectively become a “tourist”:

1. Heritage Towns
2. Theatre & Culture
3. Outdoor Recreation
4. Motorsports
5. Agri-Culinary

Lambton Shores is well positioned to build on these travel triggers – we have them all – but are we effectively identifying and marketing our assets? Our ability to identify and promote this area's assets is accomplished through a mixture of volunteer-based groups and private enterprise. Marketing and advertising costs are accordingly diversified within these various groups, with each limited by their own individual budgets. The overall Tourism Services 2013 advertising budget to promote the entire area was just \$8,409 in direct advertising expenditure with another \$1,642 in bartered arrangements.

HERITAGE TOWNS

Thanks to Grand Bend's Historical Society, a self-guided walking tour of Grand Bend was developed in 2012 along with a supporting brochure

New for 2013

The Historical Society installed historical plaques in Grand Bend to identify some of the key buildings listed in the brochure. As well, they permitted the Chamber to reproduce the brochure's content in the 2013 visitor guide.

Look for in 2014

For 2014, Chamber volunteer Debbie Kirkwood has been working with a volunteer from the Forest Museum to add a self-guided walking tour of Forest to the annual visitor guide.

THEATRE & CULTURE

The area's largest theatre asset is the Huron Country Playhouse. In addition, the area is well-placed to act as a central location for a cultural vacation with several theatres (Victoria Playhouse, Shakespeare Festival, and Blyth Festival) within 5-minutes to an hour's drive of the Main Beach! This fact and the venues' playbills are highlighted in the annual visitor guide, as are the close proximity of artist studios/galleries and local musicians favourite performance locations.

New for 2013

Arts, Eats & Beats Studio Tour brochure increased in size to accommodate an increase in number of artists and exhibit locations. Event organized and implemented by volunteers.

INSIDE VIEW OF
2013 STUDIO TOUR BROCHURE



Buskerfest (June) – two day music and entertainment event at multiple locations in Grand Bend near the Main Beach and marina. Event organized and implemented by volunteers.

The Chamber assists volunteer-organized events with web development, print, web and electronic marketing and promotional activities.

OUTDOORS RECREATION

Cycling, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, swimming, surfing, parasailing, skydiving, fishing, skiing, snowshoeing, birdwatching and golf are outdoor activities for which tourists can find ample opportunity to do in Lambton Shores.

- Pinery Provincial Park - 600,000+ visitors annually; \$13.7-million in local spend. Bicycle, canoe, kayak, ski and snowshoe rentals.
- Rock Glen Conservation Area - County's only waterfall and unique opportunity to fossil hunt
- Multiple hiking trails as part of the Ausable Bayfield and St. Clair Region conservation authorities, as well as the work of Lambton Shores Nature Trails Blazers in identifying, establishing and maintaining many local hiking trails
- Rotary Trail – hike or bike from Grand Bend's main intersection to Pinery Park's entrance
- Grand Bend Parasail – new business in 2013; launches from the Main Beach
- Grand Bend Sport Parachuting
- Multiple golf courses – a dozen golf courses within a 30-minute drive of the Main Beach
- Beaches and marinas – uninterrupted Blue Flag status for the Main Beach (Grand Bend) and Blue Flag status for both of the Municipality's marinas (Grand Bend & Port Franks); multiple beaches along the shoreline alternatively private and public access.

New in 2013

Starting in the 2012 visitor guide, dedicated sections focused on activity-specific content which was expanded in 2013 to include larger hiking & fishing and golf sections. In addition, some editorial content transitioned to the GrandBendTourism.com website.

Look for in 2014

Chamber volunteer Debbie Kirkwood worked with a local birdwatching enthusiast to expand the visitor guide's editorial content on this subject matter. Now, more than just Tundra Swans, the editorial content identifies the number of bird species as well popular spots for birdwatching.

MOTORSPORTS

Over the last decade, wheel-based sports fans are gaining the respect they deserve from tourism and hospitality businesses. Whether drag-racing or motorcycling, motorsport fans and participants invest substantially in their vehicles (cars or motorbikes) and likewise those active in this tourism niche tend to have matching budgets to spend on accommodation, food and drink and other attractions.

As well, cycling is moving beyond just the interest of a few keen health enthusiasts to a broader target audience of active-minded families and groups, who make cycling a core focus of their vacation.

Look for in 2014

The *Cruise the Coast* award-winning motorcycling map was produced by Norfolk County Tourism. It's a laminated, folding map showing various motorcycle touring routes along Lake Erie's coastline. Now under the new Regional Tourism Organization structure, Norfolk's original concept was adopted and expanded to include other areas of RTO#1/Ontario's Southwest. The 2014 edition includes routes throughout the RTO region, including Lambton Shores. Tourism Sarnia Lambton contributed to the "Cruise the St. Clair River & Lake Huron Shore Route", while Tourism Middlesex contributed to the "Tour Middlesex Route" – both of which end at Lambton Shores' shoreline. Copies are available at the Welcome Centre.



AGRI-CULINARY

Agri-culinary tourism denotes both agri-tourism and culinary-tourism and generally refers to a tourism experience that contributes to the learning or appreciation of food production and preparation as it relates to local, regional, heritage or cultural traditions and techniques. This can include farm-gate operations, culinary learning/tasting events, foodie tours, tours of micro-brewery or winery operations and farmers' markets.

For a number of years, the Huron Tourism Association and Tourism Sarnia Lambton have produced farm-gate map guides in support of the "buy local buy fresh" trend that's seeing more consumers interested in knowing where their food comes from and buying quality ingredients and food-stuffs.

Local Support

In addition to stocking both organizations' publications, key local area specialty providers are highlighted in the visitor guide with the Forest and Grand Bend farmers' market dates listed in the guide's Festivals & Events section and on the GrandBendTourism.com website.

Arts, Eats & Beats Studio Tour and *Buskerfest* incorporated food and drink elements into their events through the involvement of key local area restaurants, who in turn provided menu items utilizing locally grown and raised food products.

TOURISM & VISITOR SERVICES 2013

Tourism Services: Marketing, promoting and “selling” an area to potential visitors for pleasure and business as a preferred travel destination. Marketing tools typically include visitor guides, guides for event and meeting planners and tour operators, attracting and hosting travel writers, website, and marketing and advertising campaigns (electronic and print). A marketing plan would typically breakdown the target market universe into specific areas of focus, such as travel trade, consumers, and meeting & event planners, sport tourism.

Tourism services for Lambton Shores focuses on the consumer. The professional markets are managed by Tourism Sarnia Lambton.

Visitor Services: Year-round advice and face-to-face information counseling, plus access to area maps, brochures and services that help an area visitor plan their time and locate the tourism products and services they desire. This includes information about area events, festivals and attractions, helping visitors decide what to see and do.

TOURISM SERVICES

Marketing & Advertising

PRINT ADVERTISING / TOURIST EVENTS / TRAVEL WRITERS

2013 Cost - \$9,460 / \$0 recoverable.

Promote our product – Lambton Shores – in proven, well-established visitor guides and their accompanying websites, at key tourism events and where the opportunity arises host/tour travel writers to showcase the area’s offering.

New in 2013

At the annual Huron Tourism Association’s tourism summit and brochure swap event held in Exeter on April 16, 2013, Chamber Manager Susan Mills served as one of the tour’s guides. Bonnie Sitter acted as guide for the Exeter portion of the bus tour and Susan Mills picked up tour narration when the tour bus reached the Starlite Drive-In in Shipka. As the bus tour drove along County Road 81 to Main Street West in Grand Bend, including River Road and Ontario Street before heading back to Exeter along County Road 83, Susan Mills talked about the tourism and economic growth contributions of Grand Bend Sport Parachuting, Grand Bend Motorplex, Pickling Onion Group, Huron Country Playhouse, Main Street West – street and beach rehabilitation and Foodies, River Road Gallery, Sunset Arts Gallery, Richman Gallery and Smackwater Jack’s Taphouse, Oakwood Resort, Sea Jewels, Port Blake Park, Hayter’s Turkeys and The Whole Pig.

Refer to the Appendix for samples of print and web ads placed for the 2013 season in Navigate, Summer Fun Guide, DayTripping, Bluewater Visitors Guide, Pinery Provincial Park visitors guide and Drayton Entertainment Playbill.



**It starts at the beach...
and ends where you want!**

- Swim • Bike • Hike
- Canoe • Camp • Golf
- Drag Race
- Shop • Tour & Taste
- Festivals & Events
- Live Theatre

Grand Bend Tourism.com
Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce
1-888-338-2001

Check online for accommodation availability at:
GrandBendTourism.com/STAY

A number of the print publications included online advertising as part of their package, so a single buy did double-duty.

- Blue Water Visitors Guide: 55,000 guides distributed at Ontario Travel Centres, CAA stores, hotels, tourist kiosks, sports stores, corporate lobbies, cafeterias via CTM, brochure displays in GTA & Ottawa.
- Ontario's West Coast: 35,000 guides distributed throughout Huron County and into Grey and Bruce counties, as well as festivals and events such as the Celtic Festival (Goderich), National Motocross (Walton), annual Threshers & Hobby Show and another 50+ events.
- Navigate - Sarnia & Lambton County Travel Guide; 30,000 produced/distributed
- Pinery Provincial Park Visitors Guide: Distributed at the Pinery Park entrance gate, which annually welcomes 600,000 visitors.
- Summer Fun Guide: 250,000 guides distributed along 400 & 401 highways, major Ontario attractions, title sponsor of enRoute Centres
- DayTripping: 40,000 copies per issue distributed at tourist kiosks and Ontario Travel Centres, Chamber offices, restaurants, grocery stores etc. (Windsor and Sarnia along north shore of Lake Erie to Grand River, west of Hamilton to Waterloo area, Goderich and Lake Huron coast).

SOCIAL & E-MEDIA AND WEBSITE MARKETING

2013 Cost - \$7,102 / \$3,321 recoverable through participation fees.

Promote Lambton Shores, area festivals and events, attractions and business offerings in Social Media (Facebook / Twitter), electronic media (monthly e-newsletter to 1,242 tourist contacts), and through GrandBendTourism.com (extended functionality includes geo-mapping of area businesses, amenities, attractions and online accommodation availability via Webervations).

New in 2013

e-Newsletter: Designed, researched and wrote of a monthly e-newsletter highlighting a key local amenity or event as well as providing a calendar of upcoming events.

Smart phone friendly maps: Web-based, mobile-friendly, interactive merchant map launched July 18, 2013 on GrandBendTourism.com in promotion of local area attractions, restaurants, accommodations, shops and services to help year-round residents, cottagers and visitors find local merchants. Same map will launch on ShopForest.ca soon!

Mobile friendly website: In June, the GrandBendTourism.com website was moved into a mobile device friendly template with a responsive navigation. This is just one step in many towards making the website more universally accessible.

Look for in 2014

Smart phone friendly maps for all! Non-Chamber and non-BIA businesses will be able to get mapped for a small one-time administration fee of \$50.



TOURIST E-NEWSLETTER - SEPT 2013 EDITION

Homepage changes: Changes to the homepage of GrandBendTourism.com will make access to travel trigger content easier and quicker to find and use. As well, more photographically supported content will be included.

ANNUAL VISITOR GUIDE – ITS STARTS AT THE BEACH

2013 Cost - \$24,475 / \$24,475 recoverable through advertising sales.

Promote Lambton Shores' amenities, attractions, festivals & events, historical walks and places to Stay, Play, Dine, Shop and obtain Services through a Lambton Shores' focused publication – Annual Visitor Guide - that showcases the depth and breadth of “travel trigger” tourist options.

Annually we print and distribute 30,000 visitor guides throughout Ontario at:

- Ontario Travel Centres (18)
- Local & regional tourist information centres
- Local businesses
- Email/phone/mail requests
- Conferences/events

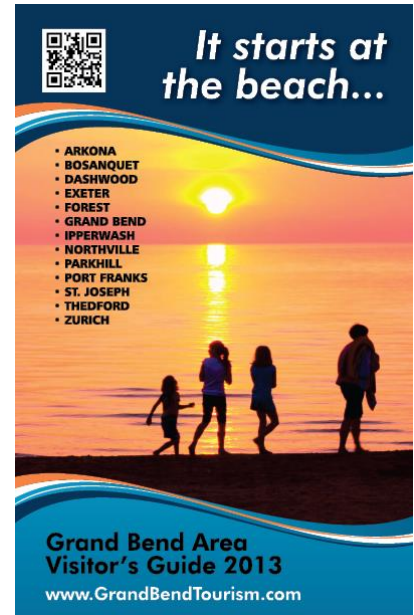
Summary of Distribution Locations:

Ontario-Wide: Alymer, Amherstburg, Bainsville, Bancroft, Barrie, Blyth, Bobcaygeon, Bothwell, Brantford, Burlington, Cambridge, Chatham, Chute-A-Blondeau, Clinton, Collingwood, Cornwall, Elora, Fort Erie, Fort Frances, Gananoque, Georgetown, Guelph, Hamilton, Hill Island, Kincardine, Lancaster, Leamington, Little Current, London, Midland, Milton, Minden, Minto, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Northbrook, Oshawa, Owen Sound, Port Burwell, Port Colbourne, Port Dover, Port Stanley, Prescott, Sarnia, Shakespeare, Simcoe, Sombra, Southampton, St. Jacobs, St. Mary's, St. Thomas, Stratford, Tilbury, Tillsonburg, Toronto, Walkerton, Wasaga Beach, Waterford, Wheatley, Windsor, Wingham, Woodstock

Locally: Grand Bend, Bayfield, Exeter, Parkhill, Forest, Goderich, Seaforth and to all our Chamber members, which in addition to those towns listed includes Camlachie, Ipperwash, Port Franks, Thedord, Arkona, Ailsa Craig, Hensall, Zurich, St. Joseph, Dashwood etc.

2013 Visitor guide sections include:

Festivals & Events, Beaches & Marinas, Fishing & Hiking, Birdwatching, Golf, Art, Theatre & Music, Heritage & Museums, Historical Walking Tour of Grand Bend, Motorsports & Cycling, Other Attractions (indoor pools, fitness centres, skydiving, parasailing, mini golf), places to Stay, Dine, Shop, obtain Services and special Move To The Lake sections, Tips for Travellers, Business Directories & Maps (Grand Bend & Forest), Street Maps (Arkona, Ipperwash, Port Franks, Thedford), Regional map, Canoe & kayak maps, Community Directory (churches, municipal & government services, emergency & health services, education/schools, sports clubs, service organizations) and Welcome Messages from Mayor Bill Weber and Chamber President.



In addition to the guide being a print product, an electronic flipbook version is available online: www.GrandBendTourism.com/it-starts-at-the-beach. Website addresses that display in the book are hyperlinked to the referenced website. As well, advertisers' ads are linked to their website.

Look for in 2014

Expanded content for Birdwatching and a new Historical Walking Tour of Forest

ADVOCACY & REPRESENTATION OF LAMBTON SHORES

2013 Cost - \$1,626 / \$0 recoverable.

Due to our geographic location, we must advocate for Lambton Shores on two sets of upper tier tourism marketing organizations. This requires attendance at monthly Board Meetings, participation in development of county-level marketing plans and various special projects (such as Lambton County's Branding Initiative). In addition, we respond to Media Inquiries.

On January 22, 2013, the Chamber hosted a meeting of RTOs and DMOs, representatives from three municipalities and directors of our Board with the focus of promoting this area's assets in a holistic way:

- Bluewater (Municipality of): Mark Cassidy (Economic Development Officer)
- Huron Tourism Association (HTA): Jenna Ujiye (Tourism Marketer for Huron County)
- Lambton Shores (Municipality of): Bill Weber (Mayor), Brent Kittmer (Community Services Director)
- RTO1: Jim Hudson (CEO)
- RTO4: David Peacock (CEO), Napier Simpson (Marketing Director)
- South Huron (Municipality of): Roy Hardy (CAO)
- Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce: Glen Baillie (President / Baillie's Picture Framing), Mark Lewis (Vice President / 104.9 the Beach), Joan Karstens (Director / Brentwood on the Beach), Susan Mills (Chamber Manager)
- Tourism Sarnia Lambton (TSL): Marshall Kern (Chair), Marlene Wood (TSL Manager)

One of the greatest challenges for us in promoting this area comes to the jurisdictional boundaries that effectively cut up our assets, making it look like we have less to offer than we do. As a Chamber – and representative of local business – we know tourists flow into and through this area from gateway communities such as Forest, Exeter, Zurich and Bayfield and this is why local businesses from Goderich to Camlachie to Ailsa Craig to Hensall to Clinton to Bayfield are Chamber members. They know THE BEACH is the main draw and it spirals out in a radius from that point to them.

Four months in the making, the RTO-DMO-Chamber-Municipalities meeting focused was how we can all work together to promote this area's assets in a holistic way, ignoring the geo-political boundaries. Tourists don't know and don't care about the boundaries and we need to be more tourist-focused. No longer can Oakwood Resort, Huron Country Playhouse and Grand Bend Motorplex be stripped from this area's list of amenities when tourist marketing materials highlight this area.

The Chamber's Manager represents the Municipality of Lambton Shores on the Board of Directors of Tourism Sarnia Lambton (TSL) and Huron Tourism Association (HTA). This requires attendance at monthly meetings located throughout the two counties. In effect, double-duty is in order to fully and comprehensively have this area represented adequately. Positive results are beginning to be seen from the Chamber's years of effort.

TSL and HTA staffs have networked at a number of Chamber hosted events and now have an improved understanding of each other's activities, goals and strategies.

New in 2013

Ongoing into 2013- As a member of the **Lambton County Branding Initiative** Committee (chaired by George Mallay of Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership), the Chamber participated in North Star's research efforts to identify the characteristics of Lambton county that are top-of-mind for residents, visitors, businesses and other stakeholders. At the year progressed, research results were compiled and analyzed and results publically announced in several locations in the fall including at the Grand Bend Legion on October 27, 2013.

Through their research, North Star revealed that "waterfronts" – whether lake, rivers or ponds – were a key characteristic of Lambton County that resonated with all respondents. For those of us living lakeside, that's no surprise – that reinforces what we know of our residents, tourists and area visitors.

As this report is written, the next stage of the project is well underway with YFactor charged with developing the wordmark, logo and taglines to be used for all purposes – tourism, economic development, business development and retention. The results will be announced during the first part of 2014.

The community branding partners are: Blue Water Bridge Authority; Community Round Table; County of Lambton; Grand Bend and Area Chamber of Commerce; Lambton College; Sarnia-Lambton Local Immigration Partnership; Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce; Sarnia-Lambton Real Estate Board; Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board; Sarnia-Lambton Business Development Corporation; Sarnia Arts Community; Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership; Tourism Sarnia-Lambton.

COMMUNITY EVENT & ORGANIZATION SUPPORT

2013 Cost - \$1,249 / \$0 recoverable.

Since events are identified by tourism research as a key travel trigger, we work to support local volunteer-organized events with marketing and promotion, such as Tundra Swans, Paint Ontario, Arts, Eats & Beats studio tour, Drive 'N Jive, Canada Day, Aquafest, Forest Fall Fair, Grand Bend & Forest Farmer's markets, Winter Carnival, Port Franks Camera club, Golden Agers Club etc. Support takes the form of free event ads in the visitors guide, online listings, and event promotion in print advertising and ticket sales at the Welcome Centre.

The Chamber organizes the Thanksgiving Market & Sidewalk Sale and Christmas Comes Early. Both events are multi-town events.

Visitor Services

Welcome Centre, Outdoor Message Centre Display board

WELCOME CENTRE

2013 Cost - \$10,151 / \$0 – recoverable.

Provide a year-round tourist information centre at a key location, open 7-days per week during peak tourist season



(mid-May to Labour Day) and open 5-days per week during shoulder and winter seasons. The Welcome Centre provides a convenient location for area visitors and newcomers to obtain area information. Staff (1 person), volunteers (2 office volunteers) and summer students (2 students) respond to email and phone inquiries, answer questions about local amenities, attractions, businesses and municipal services, provides visitor guides and brochures in support of local amenities and activities, provide tourists with computer/internet access and a toll free phone number. Annually, the Welcome Centre handles 11,000+ requests from area visitors and potential area visitors.

- 3,701 phone calls
- 3,101 in-person visitors
- 4,200+ emails

OUTDOOR MESSAGE CENTRE DISPLAY BOARD

2013 Cost - \$6,382 / 100% – recoverable.

Two outdoor display boards stand in front of the Welcome Centre, one with a street map of Grand Bend and the second displaying area event flyers and notifications (Forest Fall Fair, Port Franks Camera Club, Huron Country Playbill, Studio Tour etc.).

Human Resources

2013 Cost - \$54,027 / \$8,248 – recoverable.

Whereas the human resources cost is actually \$54,027 when wages and employer-paid source deductions and contributions are factored in, the Chamber only presents 50% of its manager's time for budgetary consideration to the Municipality of Lambton Shores. This figure represents the amount of time the Chamber manager spends on tourism and visitor services. All of the summer students' time (and required payroll source deductions payable by the employer – CPP, EI, WSIB) and 100% of the volunteers' time are devoted to tourism and visitor services.



APPENDIX

2013 Print & Web advertising samples

1 HALF PAGE AD IN "NAVIGATE" - TOURISM SARNIA LAMBTON'S VISITOR GUIDE - 30,000 PRODUCED



It starts at the beach...
and ends where you want!

- Swim • Bike • Hike
- Canoe • Camp • Golf
- Drag Race
- Shop • Tour & Taste
- Festivals & Events
- Live Theatre

Grand Bend Tourism.com
Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce
1-888-338-2001

Check online for accommodation availability at:
GrandBendTourism.com/STAY



2 HALF PAGE AD PLACED IN PINERY PROVINCIAL PARK VISITOR GUIDE - HANDED OUT AT PARK GATE



It starts at the beach...
and ends where you want!

- Shop & Golf
- Tour & Taste
- Festivals & Events
- Live Theatre
- Drag Race

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Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce
1-888-338-2001

www.GrandBendTourism.com / info@grandbendtourism.com



3 QUARTER PAGE AD IN DRAYTON PLAYBILL - DISTRIBUTED VIA THEIR MAILING LIST AND AT ALL THEATRES



Grand Bend

Where the Beach takes Centre Stage

- Live Theatre
- Festivals & Events
- Tour & Taste
- Shop
- Golf
- Hike
- Swim
- Bike
- Canoe

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Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce

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4 ANIMATED BANNER AD ON SUMMER FUN GUIDE'S WEBSITE



Grand Bend Tourism.com

Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce

It starts at the beach...

5 QUARTER PAGE AD IN BLUEWATER VISITORS GUIDE



It starts at the beach...

and ends where you want!

- Swim
- Bike
- Hike
- Canoe
- Camp
- Golf
- Drag Race
- Tour & Taste
- Shop
- Festivals & Events
- Live Theatre

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Arts, Eats, Beats & Bikes

"Arts, Eats & Beats" - Studio Tour
May 4 & 5 / A smorgasbord for your senses - artists, musicians & chefs.
www.grandbendstudiortour.com

Farmers' Markets
Wednesdays & Fridays, May 22 - October 9, 8am - 1pm / Colonial Hotel, Grand Bend & King Street, Forest.
www.grandbendfarmersmarket.ca

Drive 'N Jive
June 15 / Vintage car show, dinner & 50s/60s dance to the "Radio" Band.
www.grandbendoptimistclub.ca

Harleys By The Beach
June 15-16 / Canada's biggest all-bike race weekend.
www.GrandBendMotorplex.com

Huron Country Playhouse
June 4 opening with *The Sound of Music* and *Spamalot*.
www.huruncountryplayhouse.com

Go online for more information: 

Grand Bend Tourism.com
Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce
1-888-338-2001
Stay • Play • Dine • Shop • Golf • Live Theatre
www.grandbendtourism.com

6 SAMPLE AD FROM DAYTRIPPING



Grand Bend

It starts at the beach...

Blue Flag beach & Marinas • Golf • Theatre • Festivals & Events
Hiking • Fishing • Paddling • Drag racing • Dining • Shopping

888-338-2001 / www.GrandBendTourism.com / info@grandbendtourism.com

7 DAYTRIPPING PAGE BANNER FOR GRAND BEND AREA ADS. FOREST HAS ONE SPECIFIC TO FOREST

Tourism & Visitor Services Costs

MARKETING & PROMOTION

- Advertising & Promotion – Print, Events, PR \$ 9,456
- Visitor Guide \$24,475
- Advertising & Promotion – Web/Electronic \$ 7,102
- Advocacy & Representation \$ 1,100

VISITOR SERVICES

- Welcome Centre \$10,152
- Outdoor Message Centre Board \$ 6,382

HUMAN RESOURCES \$32,355 (50% of Chamber manager's time;
100% of students' time)

Total \$91,022

How Costs Are Recovered

Amount recoverable through advertising & sales	\$34,179
Contribution from Municipality of Lambton Shores	\$21,376
Contribution from Chamber of Commerce	\$27,397
Federal & Provincial Wage Grants	\$ 8,070