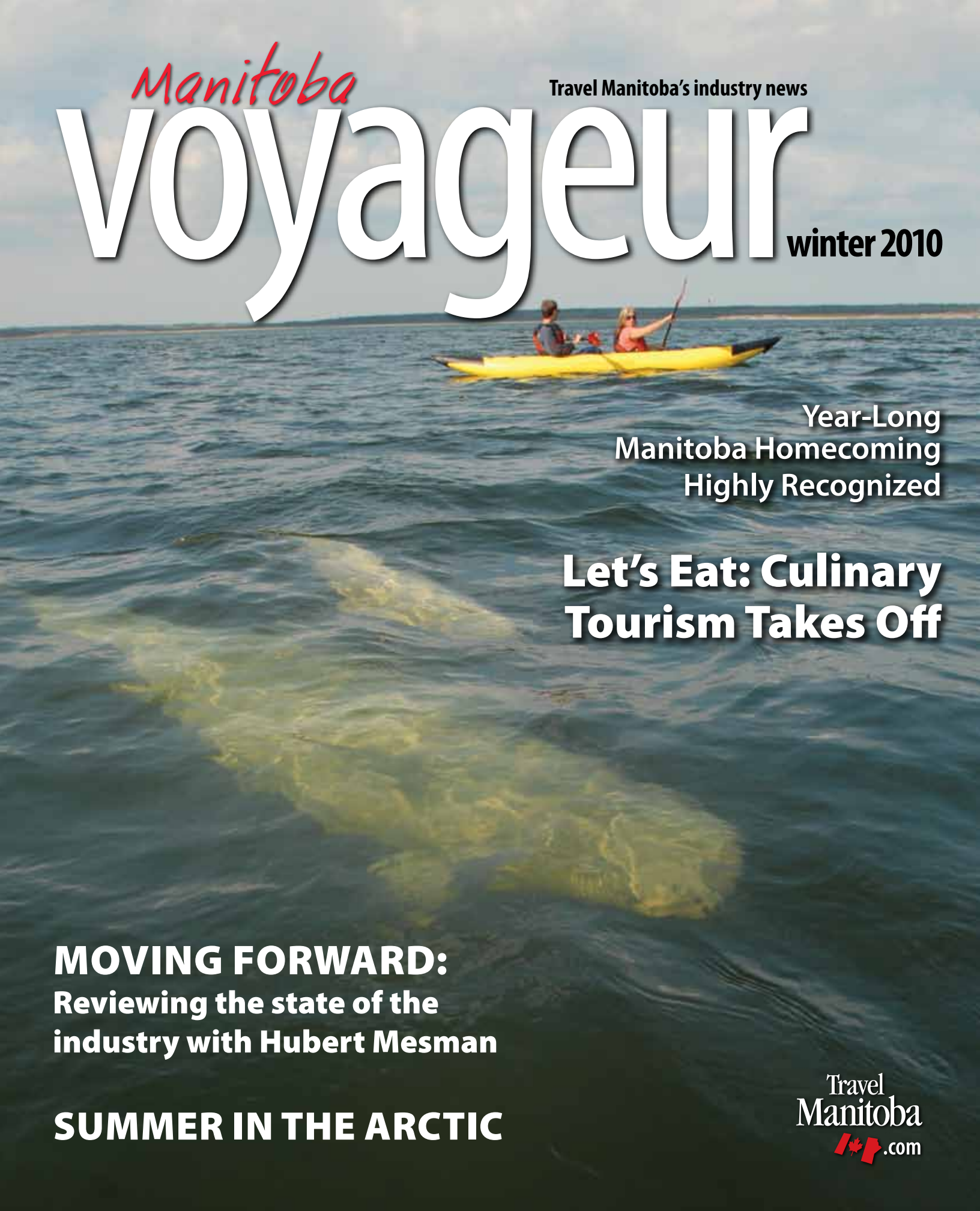

Manitoba voyageur

Travel Manitoba's industry news

winter 2010

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Let's Eat: Culinary Tourism Takes Off

MOVING FORWARD:
Reviewing the state of the industry with Hubert Mesman

SUMMER IN THE ARCTIC

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On the cover : FAM tour participants enjoy kayaking in Churchill.

MESSAGE FROM THE *President and CEO*

As the year winds down it looks like overall tourism performance in Manitoba was considerably stronger than 2009. A solid year of meeting and convention bookings combined with major events and a successful Manitoba Homecoming 2010 initiative all helped improve bottom lines across much of the industry. We share the Conference Board of Canada's optimism that their fall forecasts of a 4.3% increase in total overnight tourist expenditures for 2010 will be a reality.

Of course that does not diminish the fragile economic environment and highly competitive markets that all of Manitoba's tourism operators are subjected to. The U.S. market continues to underperform and plague operators, particularly our fishing and hunting lodges and outfitters.

Travel Manitoba staff were extremely busy this past summer with travel trade and media familiarization trips. We continue to build marketing partnerships with international tour operators and our general sales agents in the U.K. and Germany are seeing growing interest and sales. We have also conducted several very successful Best Practice Missions with our industry partners.

As we look to 2011, pre-booked M&C business is comparatively soft and, while the Conference Board is forecasting a 4.7% increase in overnight tourism spending for Manitoba, continued strong marketing efforts will be required to reach that target. Our 2011 Marketing Plan includes incremental investment in our primary access and long haul markets. We intend to strengthen our "Celebrate Manitoba" in-market campaign and plans are already underway to maintain several legacy events from the Manitoba Homecoming line-up.

As we move forward with plans for 2011, we have new board members to help guide our strategies. We are pleased to welcome Merv Gunter of Frontiers North Adventures, Riva Harrison of CentrePort Canada, Sonny Lavallee, formerly of the Northern Manitoba Trapper's Festival and Daryl Silver of Continental Travel Group.

After nearly 40 years of rewarding work in various aspects of the tourism industry in Manitoba, I will be retiring from Travel Manitoba at the end of this year. I have been very fortunate to work in a dynamic growth industry and the improvements that I have seen across the tourism industry over the years have been quite amazing.

The next chapter will be even more even more exciting, as our new international airport opens and major new attractions such as the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, Assiniboine Park re-development, Upper Fort Garry Heritage Park and Interpretive Centre and the strong potential for a UNESCO World Heritage Site all come together.

I have been exceptionally fortunate to have a tremendous Board and very experienced Industry Advisory Committees during my tenure as President and CEO at Travel Manitoba. My thanks go out to Paul Robson, our Board Chair and all current and past Board members for your inspiration and guidance. I am also deeply indebted to our amazing management team and talented staff for all that we have accomplished over the past five years. It has been a pleasure and honour to work with all of you.

Looking to the future, I'm confident that Manitoba's tourism industry will continue to thrive. I will continue to boast about our incredible province and its many attributes. To all my friends and colleagues in the industry, thank you for your support and for making my career so rewarding. Best of luck in all your future endeavours.

Hubert Mesman

Travel Manitoba Partnerships Stimulate Tourism Growth

After two difficult years, Manitoba's tourism industry is experiencing growth and is moving forward, said Hubert Mesman, Travel Manitoba's President and CEO, to 150 members of the tourism industry at the organization's fifth annual general meeting held on November 9 at Red River Exhibition Park.

Citing the global economic recession and continuing declines in U.S. visitation, Mesman acknowledged the challenges Manitoba's tourism industry faced in 2009.

Outgoing Chair of Travel Manitoba's Board of Directors, Paul Robson, praised the dedication and resiliency of Manitoba's tourism industry, also noting how strong partnerships with industry and government have stimulated tourism growth. The Conference Board of Canada is forecasting an increase of 4.3% in total overnight tourism expenditures for 2010.

"We had some of the best partnerships that I've seen," said Mesman, giving the example of the strength of the Celebrate Manitoba campaign, a partnership initiative between Travel Manitoba and the Rural Tourism Associations to encourage Manitobans to visit their province first. "Partnerships are how we will move to the next step in growing tourism in Manitoba." Part of growing tourism in Manitoba, explained Mesman, also includes dealing with increased competition from emerging markets such as Asia, Africa and the Middle East, facing the challenge of Manitoba's reliance on domestic tourism and meeting the needs of technology-savvy travellers.

The Honourable Flor Marcelino, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, brought greetings on behalf of the Government of Manitoba, echoing the importance of partnerships for Manitoba's tourism industry.

"The Government of Manitoba recognizes the need for partnerships in all aspects of the tourism sector: building infrastructure, managing attractions, supporting small business development, enhancing visitor services, expanding marketing and developing training."

Both Mesman and Minister Marcelino emphasized the importance of product development and enhancement to reach both existing and emerging markets, citing projects such as the future Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the redevelopment of Assiniboine Park and the Upper Fort Garry redevelopment as projects that have the potential to be major tourism draws.

Also noted was the potential of the eastside boreal forest, the bid to have the region designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the development of First Nation-led businesses. To support these initiatives, the Minister announced at the AGM the government's new Eastside Tourism Investment Program (EASTIP), which will provide grants up to $15,000 to qualifying entrepreneurs seeking to establish or enhance a tourism business within the eastern region of the province.

To ensure that Manitoba's tourism industry continues to move forward, especially considering the increase in worldwide competition, Mesman said a long-term planning strategy is required. A strategic planning session held in December with Travel Manitoba senior staff, board members and industry representatives, called "Vision 2020", will outline ways to enhance Manitoba's position as a sustainable tourism destination and will hopefully guide the province in developing a more formal plan.

Robson and Minister Marcelino both took the opportunity to thank Mesman, who is retiring at the end of the year, for his years of leadership and service to Manitoba's tourism industry, which were recognized by a standing ovation from those in attendance.

To read more about Travel Manitoba's accomplishments and challenges in 2009 and its future directions, please see the Travel Manitoba 2009-2010 annual report at http://ti.travelmanitoba.com.

Manitoba tourism industry weathers summer 2010 well

Year-Long Manitoba Homecoming Highly Recognized

Manitoba's tourism industry had high hopes for the summer of 2010, anticipating that despite weather woes, the industry would see a rebound after 2009.

While visitation from the U.S. continues to be affected by issues such as the exchange rate and passport requirements, total U.S. entries to Manitoba as of August 2010 remain unchanged from 2009.The numbers increased slightly in June and July and declined slightly in August. As of August 2010, total U.S. entries to Canada were down 2.5%.

The trend of rebounding visitation from international markets continued this summer. June, July and August all recorded double digit increases over 2009. By the end of the summer, total overseas visitation to Manitoba was up 20.6% from last year. Germany and Japan continue to post positive increases in visitation. Year-to-date total overseas visitation to Canada was up 7.0% from 2009.

Hotel occupancy rates in Manitoba during the summer months were up slightly over 2009, sitting around 65% and room rates saw an increase of about 4.1%.

Manitoba's top festivals saw record audiences this summer. The Winnipeg Folk Festival topped its previous attendance record with 45,325 people attending the five-day event. The Winnipeg Fringe Festival broke the record for the highest overall ticket sales in its history, reaching a total indoor attendance of 86,717. Folklorama noted a three-year high in attendance numbers, with 447,000 visits to 45 pavilions. Dauphin's CountryFest also saw a record crowd, with over 14,000 in attendance.

Optimism is high for 2011, with forecasts indicating a 4.7% increase in total overnight tourism expenditures, according to the Conference Board of Canada.

With 2010 coming to an end, many Manitobans will remember this year as one of celebration and fun with visiting friends and family. With the year-long Manitoba Homecoming 2010 wrapping up, preliminary results show the initiative was successful. In fact, plans are underway to maintain the momentum by building on the success of some of the signature events, including Saison Voyageur, Manitoba Day and Lights on Broadway.

A survey of 1,002 people completed by Probe Research on behalf of Travel Manitoba shows that 81% of Manitobans were familiar with Manitoba Homecoming. The survey also shows that 17% of Manitobans attended a Manitoba Homecoming event and 10% invited friends and family home. While the majority of those who invited someone home invited one or two people, 22% invited 10 to 19 people to Manitoba.

Most Homecoming visitors to Manitoba stayed one to two nights, but almost one quarter stayed four to six nights. Each visitor, on average, spent 6.4 nights in Manitoba.

Manitoba Homecoming's goal was to attract 50,000 visitors to the province and generate $30 million in incremental spending. Final results will be available in 2011.

TRADE MISSION MARKS STRONG MANITOBA-CHINA RELATIONSHIPS

With the signing of the Approved Destination Status (ADS) agreement between Canada and China, Travel Manitoba was eager to make key connections as part of Premier Greg Selinger's Trade Mission to China September 13 to 17. Travel Manitoba coordinated the tourism program of the mission, hosting luncheon presentations in Beijing and Shanghai for Chinese tour companies and travel media.

The ADS agreement allows Canadian operators to establish relationships with Chinese outbound tourism companies to develop and promote Canadian tour packages. The trade mission offered Travel Manitoba and the participating industry representatives an opportunity for initial direct contact with some of these key Chinese travel companies. The presentations were also an important first step in building awareness of Manitoba's tourism products.

The Manitoba delegation hosted representatives from 22 tour companies and seven media. The presentations, which included opening remarks from Premier Selinger, Travel Manitoba CEO Hubert Mesman and a short video, focused on Manitoba's diverse product offerings with emphasis on outdoor products. The presentation also emphasized the strength of Manitoba's industry partners and the Chinese community in Winnipeg to service Chinese visitors.

Along with Premier Selinger and Hubert Mesman, the other Manitoba representatives were Merv Gunter of Frontiers North Adventures, Andy Ling of Canada One Travel, Ken Wong of House of Travel, Barry Rempel of Winnipeg Airports Authority and Kim Jasper of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

The overall feedback from the presentations was very positive, and several companies expressed interest in coming to Manitoba to assess our products first hand. Several media publications will also be invited to tour the province next year.

As Manitoba hopes to capture a portion of the 100 million Chinese outbound tourists expected by 2020, Travel Manitoba will continue to work with partners to assess the market potential for Manitoba's tourism products and services for the Chinese markets and to work with interested industry partners on developing service requirements including training support for ADS certification applications.

Travel Manitoba will also continue to collaborate with the Canadian Tourism Commission on marketing and promotion initiatives in China, including the Showcase Canada travel trade show in Beijing that took place in October 2010.

ARRIVING IN STYLE

AIRPORT REDEVELOPMENT REFLECTS HOW PEOPLE TRAVEL TODAY

It's been five years of construction and nearly ten years of planning, but the redevelopment of the James Armstrong Richardson International Airport is nearing its completion. Although new parking, roadways, utilities and airside improvements are part of the project, the new air terminal building is the centrepiece of the redevelopment.

"The new air terminal building is really going to reflect the way people travel now," said Christine Alongi, Director of Communications and Public Affairs with Winnipeg Airports Authority. "The old terminal building was built in the 1950s, there was no security, there were no liquid and gel rules."

With the evolution of air travel and a deteriorating terminal building, the Winnipeg Airports Authority began the five year construction project, with a price tag of $585 million, funded entirely through the Airport Improvement Fee.

"We are the last airport in Canada to go through a rehabilitation. So we have the newest technology and state of the art systems," said Alongi.

Many of the improvements aim to eliminate the long, snaking lines that plagued the old terminal building. In addition to the extra square footage of the new terminal building, the revamped security area is open, transparent and has more lanes, the customs processing facilities are expanded, and the check-in area is designed to take advantage of the efficiencies provided by a common use approach.

"All the kiosks and stations can be allocated based on capacity requirements," explained Alongi of the common use approach. "We're all working together to ensure the travel experience is pleasant, seamless and quick. The idea is that you don't wait in line."

One of the biggest design elements in the new terminal building is an emphasis on natural light, transparency and open space. The openness will help people find their

way and move through the terminal more easily. And the 'grand staircase' which was a well-loved part of the old building is recreated in the new one.

An abundance of windows and skylights, while reducing the electricity consumption of the LEED® "Certified" rated building, also serve to create a warm and welcoming feeling, said Alongi.

Also welcoming travellers is a better mix of both pre- and post-security concessions and retailers.

"We wanted to make sure there was a local presence," said Alongi, noting local favourites Stella's Café, Salisbury House and Toad Hall Toys. "And we wanted to make sure that U.S. or international travellers are comfortable with the brands we are offering," which include Starbucks, T.G.I. Friday's and PGA Tour Shops.

In addition to the retail opportunities created by the new terminal, the redevelopment has spurred even more growth.

"The whole vision was much larger than just an air terminal building," explained Alongi.

"The vision and the growth model were about leading transportation, innovation and growth. It was about making transportation happen here in our province and creating a catalyst to get people engaged and coming out to where development was taking place," said Alongi, noting how this happened with both Greyhound and Canada Post shifting their operations to the airport site.

Unexpected issues with underslab pipes carrying grey water have delayed the terminal's opening until 2011. However, the feedback to date, including from special interest groups, the provincial and federal governments and even representatives from Buckingham Palace, has been overwhelmingly positive.

And it is that exact sentiment Alongi hopes tourists to Manitoba have upon arriving at the airport.

"It's your first impression of the city you're coming into," said Alongi. "The terminal is going to reflect a very progressive city, that Winnipeg is growing and adapting. It's really going to showcase our province very positively.

"We want people to be able to travel in a much friendlier environment, and the new terminal will provide that."

Culinary Tourism offers tasty trips

It is an activity that virtually 100% of tourists engage in. An activity that speaks to all five senses and offers insight into the local culture and people. An activity available year round, at any time of day and in any type of weather. What is this activity?

Eating.

Under the banner of "culinary tourism", a term first coined in 1998, the relatively young sector is growing in size as more and more tourism operators and tourists alike realize that experiencing a destination through its food is not reserved only to upscale fine dining.

The International Culinary Tourism Association, a non-profit trade association and leading authority on the subject, defines culinary tourism "as the pursuit of unique and memorable culinary experiences of all kinds". And while almost 18% of Canadian and U.S. travellers participated in a food, wine or beer tasting, the numbers would be much higher when taking into consideration all the opportunities for culinary tourism. From street vendors and local markets to exclusive eateries and tours of processing facilities, culinary tourism can, and does, happen on nearly every vacation.

In fact, according to the Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, "food is considered to rank alongside climate, accommodation and scenery in importance to tourists."

With culinary tourism poised for further growth, Travel Manitoba organized media tours that focused on our culinary offerings and a culinary best practice mission for Manitoba operators.

Travel writers taste their way across Manitoba

The day began at 6 am aboard the Gimme Shelter, a 23-foot skiff setting out from the Gimli docks. The destination was the eight fishing nets strung not far off the shores of the vast Lake Winnipeg. On board were four travel writers, enjoying the second day of a culinary adventure that showcased the very best of what Manitoba brings to the table.

Travel Manitoba worked with Jackfish Media Group of Winnipeg to launch a media relations campaign saturating the travel media in North Dakota and Minnesota. The goal was to encourage visits to Manitoba and broaden editorial coverage of Manitoba in those markets. Journalists from Manitoba and north-western Ontario were also invited to take part in select media trips.

Two media tours were organized specifically to showcase Manitoba's culinary treasures. A three-day trip in September included a visit to Bothwell Cheese, La P'tite France and Segovia Tapas Restaurant and Bar, a daybreak ride to collect pickerel followed by a five-course tasting menu at Mask Restaurant in Gimli and a 'roll-your-own' cinnamon bun making experience at Tall Grass Prairie Bread Company.

In October, a "Duck on the Menu" media trip included a visit to Sage Garden Herbs, dinner at Horfrost in Portage la Prairie, overnight at the historic Kirchoffer Lodge at Delta Beach, a daybreak heritage duck hunting experience and a five-course duck tasting menu with wine pairings put together by Chef Ben Kramer of Diversity Food Services.

Readers and viewers of outlets in Manitoba, Ontario and south of the border will see full features and mentions designed quite literally to whet their appetites and to encourage them to explore Manitoba.

Food for Thought Best Practice Mission

More and more travellers are actively searching out opportunities for culinary tourism, translating into opportunities for economic and community development based on a unique culinary offering. To spur development in this growing sector, Travel Manitoba organized a best practice mission on culinary tourism.

From October 12 to 15, Travel Manitoba led a group of 19 industry members on a mission called "Food for Thought" through Ontario, and specifically Prince Edward County. The county includes vineyards, producers, farmers and restaurants that celebrate all things local.

The group took a hands-on cooking class at the Waring House Restaurant Inn Conference Centre and Cooking School, learning first hand that culinary tourism is an interactive experience that can have a profound impression on travellers.

Mission participant Candace Klassen, who operates the seasonal Chelsea's Restaurant in Sandy Hook, was inspired by the businesses they visited.

"They weren't just delivering their services – they were creating an experience so that people would want to come back. They were essentially creating a destination," said Klassen.

As culinary tourism is a reflection of the destination's culture, the group heard about the importance of using local ingredients at Buddha Dog, a gourmet hotdog diner known for its use of ingredients from all over the county and at Fifth Town Artisan Cheese Company that uses locally produced goat and sheep milk.

The use and promotion of local ingredients was something that really struck mission participant Wes Osborne, executive chef of the Russell Inn Hotel and Conference Centre.

"What I took out of it is that I really need to advertise on my menu and with our staff of what we are doing locally or from Manitoba," said Osborne, noting the importance of training staff to share information about local ingredients with customers.

The group also participated in the Brookstreet Food and Wine Rave, a team cooking experience that brought participants into the kitchen. The group also heard about the evolution of the program and its packaging. Seeing how these ventures have become successful and popular with tourists and locals alike encouraged many participants to think about how to incorporate what they learned into their own businesses.

"They came up with this concept to increase sales and business during their downtime," explained Osborne of the Food and Wine Rave. "The concept was very cool and I think we can utilize it in our workplace to some extent."

"Being able to go into these people's businesses and have them sharing their knowledge with us was probably, from my perspective, the best part," said Klassen.

Returning to Manitoba, Klassen has her own ideas to help her business and tourism in the area grow. Her ideas are based on building a sense of community and include inviting local artists to the restaurant to create a memorable tourism experience.

"Big or small, all of the businesses were really focused on the partnering and marketing end of things," noted Klassen.

The emphasis on partnership and marketing resonated with mission participants, as ten new culinary packages were generated as a result of the Food for Thought Best Practice Mission.

GOMEDIA DELEGATES TASTE WINNIPEG, TOUCH THE ARCTIC

Nine writers from Canada and around the world experienced Manitoba on a media trip following GoMedia Marketplace, a major annual media marketplace. From August 26 to September 1, writers from Canada, Mexico, Germany and Australia experienced "Taste Winnipeg, Touch the Arctic: Where the Wild Things Are", an urban and wilderness adventure offered by Travel Manitoba in partnership with Tourism Winnipeg and Churchill Wild.

"I'd never thought of Freemasons, French cuisine, and polar bears in the same breath until last month's trip to Winnipeg and the shores of Hudson Bay," said Lucas Aykroyd, writer with *National Geographic Traveler* and *Westworld*. "Thanks to Travel Manitoba for an itinerary that was unforgettable and well-organized – even in the face of unpredictable sub-Arctic weather."

Tourism Winnipeg hosted the group for one day, filling their bellies with fantastic Winnipeg cuisine, stimulating their minds on the Hermetic Code Tour with Frank Albo, and soothing their souls with Sierra Noble's performance at the River Barge Festival.

The group then spent the next three nights at the wild and remote Nanuk Polar Bear Lodge, located along the mud flats of Hudson Bay. Media piled onto ATV-pulled carriages and held on as our Churchill Wild guides plowed through rivers, bush and mud plains in search of polar bears. The most exhilarating encounter was when a young male bear caught a whiff of our lunch and ambled...galloped...then charged towards us. The guides thwarted the curious fellow by firing off a cracker.

Inclement weather resulted in two extra nights in Northern Manitoba. The stopover in Gillam proved well worth it when the northern lights danced.

"As a travel journalist, I've been to a lot of places, so it's easy to become jaded. But the experience at Nanuk Polar Bear Lodge is something that I will always remember. In fact, I enjoyed every minute I spent in Manitoba. Winnipeg was great and even Gillam rewarded us with a spectacular display of northern lights," said Mark Stachiew, online travel editor at www.canada.com.

Among the media on the trip, a few of them were tweeting, blogging and updating their profiles while experiencing Nanuk's special bear stalking experiences. They shared posts on northern lights, salsa dancing with new friends in the lodge and getting very close to polar bears. Or, the bears getting very close to them!

Travel Manitoba and Tourism Winnipeg will be hosting GoMedia Marketplace in Manitoba in September 2013.

MEDIA RELATIONS ANNOUNCES NEW TEAM MEMBER

Jarrett Storey, formerly of Exchange District BIZ, joins Travel Manitoba as Specialist, Media Relations. He will primarily be handling the media trip logistics for the 100+ travel and outdoors media we host from around the world.

The previous specialist, Jillian Brown, moved into the brand new Communications Specialist role, and will primarily shape online and print materials for the travel media in North America, Germany, the U.K. and China. The entire team will continue to work creatively and collaboratively to get Manitoba experiences covered and ultimately get viewers, readers, followers and fans to Manitoba.

The Media Relations team meets directly with more than 500 travel and outdoors media every year and communicates with thousands via our multiple online and print communication lines. We are always seeking new and different story ideas and experiences to pitch in relevant markets. Send updates on any new and unusual packages to Jillian Brown at jibrown@travelmanitoba.com. If you are interested in hosting media through our media tour program, contact Jarrett Storey at jstorey@travelmanitoba.com. To express your potential interest in co-sponsoring an event at a major travel media conference or marketplace, contact Cathy Senecal at csenecal@travelmanitoba.com.

Bird Is the Word:
Travel Manitoba Lands at British Birdfair

In response to market research, consultation with industry partners and a product audit by our in-market representative in the U.K., Travel Manitoba made a decision to pilot a birding market development initiative in the British market. With our central location, range of species, diversity of ecosystems and easy accessibility to prime birding sites, Manitoba has a strong potential to capitalize on the market. With over 3000 bird watching clubs and 2.7 million consumers taking a birding holiday yearly, the value of the U.K. market is estimated to be $2.36 billion annually. Travel Manitoba set out to test the market by exhibiting at the British Birdfair, August 20 to 22 at the Egleton Nature Reserve in Rutland, U.K.

Birdfair is the world's largest bird watching show, highlighting everything imaginable related to bird watching and conservation, including birding destinations, photography, optics and wildlife charities. The fair has over 300 exhibitors and welcomes 23,000 visitors over a three day period. The majority of attendees are from England, along with visitors from France, Holland, Germany and Norway.

Many destinations were represented, with a strong presence from South America, the Middle East and Africa. There were only two other North American destinations represented – South Texas Nature and Cape May, New Jersey. Joining Travel Manitoba's Manager of Market Development, Mark Clarke, were Eve Gardiner, Travel Manitoba's in-market representative and Cal Cuthbert, an avid Brandon area birder.

In addition to handouts that outlined Manitoba's attractions and sample itineraries, Travel Manitoba also did a short "in-show" promotional video to drive traffic to our booth. The video was featured on the Birdfair website as well as on four top birding websites for a four month period. Check out the video at www.birdfair.tv/2010/08/travel-manitoba/.

The video was played over 200 times and Travel Manitoba was the second most visited exhibitor page at www.birdfair.tv with over 500 page views.

Top image: Mark Clarke (right), Travel Manitoba's Manager of Market Development and Manitoba birder Cal Cuthbert at the British Birdfair.

The response from consumers was outstanding. There is keen interest in visiting Manitoba for birding and wildlife viewing. Eight British birding tour operators expressed interest in carrying or expanding their line of Manitoba product experiences. Travel Manitoba will host a familiarization trip for British tour operators in June, 2011.

For more information on Manitoba's bird watching initiatives, contact Mark Clarke, Manager of Market Development at 204-927-7818 or maclarke@travelmanitoba.com.

Bottom image: Exhibition space for the British Birdfair at the Egleton Nature Reserve in Rutland UK.

Aboriginal teachings star of new Interpretive Centre

Premier Greg Selinger reviews site plans for the Waabanong Anishinaabe Interpretive Learning Centre.

Hands-on experiences, multimedia exhibits, workshops, classes and excursions will all be a part of a first-of-its-kind interpretive learning centre based on First Nations teachings of Manitoba's natural and cultural heritage.

Premier Greg Selinger and Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism Flor Marcelino attended the site dedication ceremony for the Waabanong Anishinaabe Interpretive Learning Centre on September 30. The centre is located in Manitoba's east side boreal forest, just past the Hollow Water First Nation.

"We have much to learn from the indigenous people of Manitoba about the importance of protecting our natural and cultural treasures for future generations," said Premier Selinger in a news release.

Developed jointly with First Nations communities, the centre is part of the long-term tourism strategy to develop cultural and ecotourism infrastructure, including education and tourism opportunities developed jointly or led by Aboriginal communities. Creating awareness of this new attraction is a priority in Travel Manitoba's 2011/12 marketing strategy.

While the centre is not part of the proposed UNESCO heritage site, it will profile and support the Pimachiowin Aki project, which is aiming to secure the UNESCO designation for the area recognized internationally as one of the world's last remaining intact boreal forests.

Construction on the four-season learning centre is set to begin in the spring of 2011, with future plans featuring a tipi village and all-season cabins.

SUMMER IN THE ARCTIC

In August, Travel Manitoba hosted a FAM tour of Winnipeg and Churchill for 11 individuals from companies from throughout Canada and the U.S. The companies included three of the largest Canadian receptive companies (Toronto and Vancouver based), an adventure incentive company from BC, one of the largest international resellers of Frontiers North's Churchill programs and a representative from the Discovery Channel's student adventures programs. The group was also joined by the editor of one of the largest U.S. trade association magazines for a wild five days of Manitoban adventures. Although the group was faced with 85km/h winds and torrential rain, the FAM resulted in two proposals for new summer Churchill programs in 2012, additional product being added to receptive portfolios and some great media coverage.

Also in August, Travel Manitoba hosted Philippa Westwood, a British tour operator with Windows on the Wild. The week-long FAM highlighted the amazing summer experiences Churchill has to offer, including dog sledding, walking with polar bears at Seal River Lodge and the Tundra Buggy ® experience. The FAM focused on Lazy Bear Lodge's new Wilderness Adventure trip, which flies visitors out into the tundra in order to kayak back down the delta of South Knife River, a great spot for summer polar bear viewing, and an experience many adventure tour operators and consumers are looking for.

Moving Forward:

Reviewing the state of Manitoba's Tourism Industry with Hubert Mesman

After nearly 40 years working in tourism, Hubert Mesman is retiring from his position of President and CEO of Travel Manitoba, a post he has held since the organization became a Crown Corporation in 2005. His leadership and vision will surely be missed by this province's tourism industry. The significance of his contributions was recently recognized with his induction into the Canadian Tourism Hall of Fame, an initiative of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada.

Q: After almost forty years working in the tourism field, what changes do you think have most dramatically affected tourism development in Manitoba?

A: The most dramatic changes have really been in the last 10 years or so. Obviously technology has significantly altered the way destinations and tourism operators interact with travellers. This has affected the distribution channels and the way that tourism products are promoted and sold. The impacts of social media, for example, are rapidly changing the approach to destination marketing.

As well, competition from developing destinations driven by massive public and private investment in areas like Asia, Africa and the Middle East have caused major shifts in global travel patterns and dramatically reduced North America's international travel market share. Some might ask, what does that matter to Manitoba – but now we truly do compete on a world-wide basis.

On the developmental side, it has been very exciting to participate in the growth and maturation of the tourism industry in Manitoba. When I started working with the government in the late 70s, quite frankly the "physical plant" as we use to call it, from infrastructure to products and services, was pretty indifferent. And to be kind, the overall service culture within the industry was at best, very inconsistent. Over the years both government and private investment in capital improvements and training and development have substantially improved the overall quality of our tourism offerings. One good example of such investment was the Canada-Manitoba Tourism Agreements that ran from the mid-80s to the mid-90s and infused more than $40M into various product improvements throughout the province.

The growth of the industry over the past 10 to 15 years has impacted our economy and the overall development of our communities has been very impressive. The companies that are currently operating tourism businesses in Manitoba are much more knowledgeable and sophisticated than during my early days and that's really encouraging.

Q: So what do you see in your crystal ball for tourism in Manitoba in the next forty years?

A: We can't even reconcile quarterly economic forecasts, so forty years out is just a blurred vision for pragmatists! But it remains an interesting question and there are definitely trends that will impact planning and development decisions. First, long term sustainability of our core assets will determine future growth not only in Manitoba but throughout the world. Sustainability platforms are based on economic, social and environmental metrics and so government policy development and public and private sector financing will require risk assessment through those lenses. Second, successful destinations will maintain core principles of quality products and services, safe travel environments and responsible

tourism practices. Third, and I think this is critical, tourism in Manitoba will grow and prosper if industry and government (and I could add Education and Labour) work side by side to develop mid- to long-term strategic plans (not 40 years though) for sustainable tourism growth in the province. Indeed our Board and management staff along with our Industry Advisory Committees are at the front end of a "Vision 2020" strategic planning process with that very design in mind.

All said, in practical business, supply and demand terms I think Manitoba is well positioned over a longer term to capitalize on our core strengths, particularly our outdoor products. While there are infrastructure and operational investments needed, we have tremendous natural experiences, from wildlife viewing and outdoor adventure to fishing and hunting that are unparalleled. We will see increased demand from densely populated urban environments for soft adventure outdoor experiences with appropriate amenities.

I also believe that we have yet to tap a huge reservoir of travellers that are hungry for learning and cultural experiences. Manitoba is rich in creative talent at all levels and our performing and visual arts, eclectic music scene and successful festivals have great long-term tourist potential.

One of the recent buzz words at the Canadian Tourism Commission is "product animation" and there is a growing sense across Canada that we need to enhance our existing products and create unique new tourism experiences. We are fortunate here not only with ongoing improvements in our current product line-up, but with the excitement of new offerings including the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, the redevelopment of Assiniboine Park, the building of the upper Fort Garry Heritage Park and Interpretive Centre and the new Waabanong Anishinaabe Interpretive Learning Centre, to name a few.

Q: What are the main challenges to achieving sustainable tourism growth in Manitoba?

A: Our challenges have always been access to markets, seasonality and intense competition. I think we do a pretty good job in factoring those into marketing and development plans, although I still believe we can do more to drive traffic in the winter.

However, there are more systemic issues that impede growth in the tourism sector here and in all of Canada. A National Travel and Tourism Coalition made up of representative associations from the airlines, airports, hotels and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada recently released a White Paper entitled "The Future of Travel and Tourism in Canada" (http://ti.travelmanitoba.com/researchmarketintelligence/reports.html). The essence of this document is that Canada is no longer competitive in the global travel marketplace, particularly in the area of air travel. The paper outlines strategies and directions in five areas: Cost Competitiveness, Infrastructure, Smart Security and Efficient Border Patrols, Labour Supply and Training and a National Tourism Strategy. All of these apply to Manitoba to varying degrees and, while many are oriented to federal policies, future plans should endeavour to address these critical impediments.

Q: Can you share some personal highlights of your career with Travel Manitoba?

A: I have been fortunate to have a diverse career in a fascinating sector and there have been lots of highlights. The last five years have been particularly rewarding and I think the conversion from a government department to Crown Corporation with a great industry-led Board and wonderful staff has been a significant achievement for both government and industry. The fact that several other provinces have adopted our model is a true testimony to our success.

I have really enjoyed my work on major event acquisition. Working on bids for the Grey Cup, the Junos, World Hockey Championships and many others and then marvelling at the amazing volunteer organizational skills to deliver these events has been very rewarding. I have really fond memories of chairing the Meeting Planners International Conference in Winnipeg in the 80s and working full-time on various aspects of the Pan American Games in the 90s.

There are so many more but this is not a book, and while it sounds trite, the single highlight over all these years has been the terrific array of people that I have had the pleasure of working with. From literally dozens of Ministers and Deputy Ministers to Sector Association Presidents, Chamber and Union leaders, local, national and international tour company owners and on and on. The travel industry is by nature made up of people who love people and places...and I'm lucky enough to be one of them.

Q: Any reveals on future plans?

A: My pat response has been learn, play and work, ideally in equal proportions. We shall see.

CTC changes to make Canada more competitive

Canada keep exploring

The Canadian Tourism Commission, Canada's national tourism marketing organization, announced in July a shift in its business focus to high value international markets. In the face of increasing competition and due to the planned end in funding from federal Olympic and stimulus programs, the CTC is making strategic operational changes to free up $16 million by 2012 for redirection to priority international markets.

The CTC will no longer invest in consumer advertising and trade development in the U.S. Travel Manitoba is currently reviewing opportunities to partner and expand on travel trade sales opportunities throughout the U.S. and will continue to target key U.S. markets through media relations activities.

"The U.S. remains an important market for Manitoba and we will continue to have a significant presence in key areas," said Brigitte Sandron, Travel Manitoba's Senior Vice-President of Planning and Market Development. "While we look forward to continued partnership with the CTC in international markets, Travel Manitoba's programs and partnership opportunities will ensure we retain and even expand our presence in the U.S."

In addition, the CTC is scaling back its operations at its headquarters in Vancouver and implementing a regional office model for international markets. Certain services will be consolidated in London, U.K. for the well established markets in Europe and Australia and in Vancouver for the emerging markets of Asia, Mexico and Brazil. The use of general sales agents in France, Germany, Australia, India and Brazil will provide travel trade sales and media relations support.

For more information on Travel Manitoba's U.S. travel trade sales plans, contact Dené Sinclair at 204-927-7831 or desinclair@travelmanitoba.com.

For more information on Travel Manitoba's international travel trade sales plans, contact Lionel Johnston at 204-7831 or lijohnston@travelmanitoba.com.

For more information on Travel Manitoba's media relations plans, contact Cathy Senecal at 204-927-7827 or csenecal@travelmanitoba.com.

Engaged employees keep customers coming back

MTEC
MANITOBA TOURISM EDUCATION COUNCIL

Many of you will be familiar with the MANITOBA BEST Service Imperative, which encourages businesses to prosper by being competitive in product quality and price and leading in service. As you face more competition to recruit high quality people into your organization, it will be important for you to apply the same concept to your employees. In order to engage and keep your customers coming back, you need to engage your employees.

In order to meet rising customer expectations, Tom Roth in his article, *Want Engaged Customers? Then Engage Your Employees!*, says employers need to ensure their staff is fully engaged and capable of delivering the required customer experiences. If employers deliver only the "expected offering" to employees—fair compensation, good working conditions and reasonably competent leadership—employees may be relatively satisfied, but not necessarily ***engaged.***

Fully engaged employees are inspired to feel an emotional connection to the organization's vision and purpose, willing to commit their full energy to their work and loyal and committed to the organization.

Employee engagement results from leadership effectiveness and an engagement culture. This, in turn, leads to customer engagement, which leads to results, including increased market share, repeat business, more referrals and profitability.

In difficult economic times, it is easy to overlook the link between employee and customer engagement. Yet understanding that linkage is vital to any effort to protect and expand your customer base. An effective strategy to achieve those aims must be based on strong, committed leadership and a vibrant culture of engagement.

For more information on MANITOBA BEST Service Excellence Workshops or any other of MTEC's services, please contact Shannon Fontaine, CEO, at 1-800-820-6832 or (204) 957-7437 or by email at sfontaine@mtec.mb.ca

FIRST OPEN FARM DAY A SUCCESS

Farms across Manitoba opened their gates to visitors who were eager to learn about farm life and the business of farming.

For many, Open Farm Day, which took place on a beautiful sunny day on September 19, was the first opportunity they had to visit a farm, meet a farm family and see farming up close. Entire families were able to learn about agriculture, see demonstrations, take walking tours, buy local products, enjoy some recreational activities and gain some real hands-on experience on the farm.

More than 35 farms around the province participated in the province's first Open Farm Day including fruit and vegetable producers, crop and livestock farms and agritourism farm businesses. Farmers and visitors connected with each other as they toured dairy barns, vegetable greenhouses, fruit orchards, bison and alpaca operations, horse and cattle ranches as well as being entertained with corn mazes and hay rides.

"To be successful, farmers must be well-versed in a wide variety of topics and are excellent teachers," said Stan Struthers, Minister for Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. "The time visiting a farm certainly provided a unique educational experience and an enjoyable day for the entire family."

Agritourism provides a unique opportunity for the public to connect directly with farmers, ranchers and market gardeners for hands-on agriculture experiences and farm-fresh products.

Open Farm Day will be an annual event in Manitoba each fall.

Travel Manitoba will continue to work with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI) to develop Manitoba's agritourism sector.

MASTER ANGLER EARNS PRAISE DURING 50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

"As a yearly visitor to Manitoba to fish, I want to compliment and congratulate you on your 50th year with the Master Angler program. I have fished all over the world and Manitoba is the only place with such a program to my knowledge. Your annual catalogue and awards keep my interest piqued. It is well thought out and a fine tribute and business generator to Manitoba. Keep up your excellent work." Rowland Frazier, Reno, Nevada

Travel Manitoba .com

WELCOME TO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

On behalf of President and CEO Hubert Mesman and Board Chair Paul Robson, Travel Manitoba is happy to welcome new members to help shape Travel Manitoba's future directions. Welcome to Merv Gunter, Owner/Operator of Frontiers North Adventures; Riva Harrison, Executive Director, Marketing and Communications of CentrePort Canada; Sonny Lavallee, former Chair of the Northern Manitoba Trapper's Festival; and Daryl Silver, President of Continental Travel Group. Travel Manitoba board and staff also thank outgoing board members Barry Rempel of the Winnipeg Airports Authority, Claudette Leclerc of the Manitoba Museum and Professor Doug Ramsay of the University of Brandon for their service and dedication.

FESTIVAL DU VOYAGEUR NAMED TO ABA'S TOP 100 EVENTS LIST

The American Bus Association has named the Festival du Voyageur to its 2011 Top 100 Events in North America list, highlighting it as one of the best events to experience via motorcoach next year. This annual list is sought after by travel professionals, motorcoach operators and the general public and was published as a supplement to the September/October issue of Destinations magazine. Judges, made up from an experienced expert tourism industry selection committee, considered the event's broad appeal, its accessibility to motorcoaches and skill at handling large groups among other criteria. Congratulations, Festival du Voyageur!

NEW STAR ATTRACTIONS

Fort Dauphin Museum and South Beach Casino & Resort have been designated as Manitoba Star Attractions. Fort Dauphin features a trapper's cabin, trading post, a pioneer log house plus over 80,000 archaeological artifacts. The gaming excitement at South Beach Casino & Resort is combined with a 95-room hotel featuring lavish suites and a tropical pool. New signage with the Star Attraction logo directs visitors to the latest additions to the Star Attraction list. In total, there are 54 Star Attractions located throughout the province. To see all of Manitoba's Star Attractions, check out www.travelmanitoba.com.

MARK YOUR *Calendar*

All Canada Sport Shows
January 7-9, 2011 – St. Louis, MO
January 10-12, 2011 – Indianapolis
January 13-16, 2011 – Chicago, IL
January 20-23, 2011 – Milwaukee, WI
January 24-26, 2011 – Madison, WI
January 27-30, 2011 – Green Bay, WI
February 3-5, 2011 – Sioux Falls, SD
February 7-9, 2011 – Omaha, NE
February 11-13, 2011 – Des Moines, IA
February 18-20, 2011 – Minneapolis, MN
February 25-27, 2011 – Dallas, TX

For more information, contact Jeanette Kosie at jkosie@travelmanitoba.com.

American Bus Association (ABA) Annual Marketplace
Philadelphia, PA
January 7-12, 2011

This American Bus Association event is designed to foster relationships between North American motor coach and tour companies in an appointment-based, multi-day conference program. The annual marketplace attracts more than 350 attendees. For more information contact Dené Sinclair at desinclair@travelmanitoba.com.

2011 Florida RV SuperShow
Tampa, FL
January 13-16, 2011

Travel Manitoba is sending two representatives from the Manitoba Association of Campgrounds and Parks (MACAP) to attend this show, which attracts 50,000 people. The show includes over 1,100 RVs on display, over 300 exhibit booths including campgrounds, destinations, RV suppliers and accessories. For more information contact Michel LaRivière at mlariviere@travelmanitoba.com.

Barrett Jackson
Scottsdale, AZ
January 17-23, 2011

Expanding marketing initiatives for hunting and fishing, Travel Manitoba travels to this collector car event. For more information contact Jeanette Kosie at jkosie@travelmanitoba.com.

German Travel Trade Sales Mission
January 24-28, 2011

Travel Manitoba's international sales consultant and industry partners travel to Germany to meet with travel trade professionals. For more information contact Lionel Johnston at lijohnston@travelmanitoba.com.

Religious Conference Management Association
Tampa, FL
January 25-28, 2011

As religious conferences and meetings are estimated to be a $10 billion industry in North America and $18 billion globally, Team Winnipeg will be attending this event. For more information contact Mark Clarke at maclarke@rtravelmanitoba.com.

Safari Club International Annual Hunters' Convention
Reno, NV
January 26-29, 2011

For the second year, Travel Manitoba returns to the SCI Convention, the largest marketplace of its kind in the world. For more information contact Jeanette Kosie at jkosie@travelmanitoba.com.

Tête-à-Tête
Ottawa, ON
January 27, 2011

Team Winnipeg will once again be attending this premier event for meeting planners, association executives and business partners in the Ottawa-Gatineau region. For more information contact Mark Clarke maclarke@travelmanitoba.com

JANUARY 2011

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FEBRUARY 2011

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MARCH 2011

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Chicago Travel & Adventure Show
Chicago, IL
January 29-30, 2011

Now in its seventh year, this show attracts over 13,000 consumers and travel agents in a two-day face-to-face marketing format. For more information contact Dené Sinclair at desinclair@travelmanitoba.com.

MARK YOUR *Calendar*

Jagd und Hund
Dortmund, Germany
February 1-6, 2011

Travel Manitoba returns for the second year to this popular consumer hunting and fishing show. For more information contact Lionel Johnston at lijohnston@travelmanitoba.com.

The Educational Travel Conference (ETC)
Providence, RI
February 16-19, 2011

The only event of the year where group travel suppliers come face-to-face with more than 250 group travel planners. This conference also brings together the suppliers and destinations that serve the growing educational travel market for lifelong learning and affinity travel. Travel Manitoba attends this conference in partnership with Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Quebec. For more information contact Dené Sinclair at desinclair@travelmanitoba.com.

New York Times Travel Show
New York, NY
February 25-27, 2011

The New York Times Travel Show is acknowledged around the globe as one of the leading consumer and travel trade shows in the U.S. In 2011, the show will offer a rare opportunity to reach more than 24,000 responsive travelers and travel professionals. For more information contact Dené Sinclair at desinclair@travelmanitoba.com.

ITB Berlin
Berlin, Germany
March 8-12, 2011

This event combines trade and public expositions with the world's largest professional tourism convention. For more information contact Lionel Johnston at lijohnston@travelmanitoba.com.

U.K. Travel Trade Sales Mission
March 14-18, 2011

Travel Manitoba's international sales consultant and industry partners travel to the U.K. to meet with travel trade professionals. For more information contact Lionel Johnston at lijohnston@travelmanitoba.com.

Los Angeles Times Travel & Adventure Show
Los Angeles, CA
March 19- 20, 2011

This is the largest travel event in the U.S., with over 500 exhibitors representing destinations around the world and attracting over 20,000 consumers and travel trade. For more information contact Dené Sinclair at desinclair@travelmanitoba.com.

Northwest Sports Show
Minneapolis, MN
March 30-April 3, 2011

Travel Manitoba promotes its hunting and fishing experiences at this five-day consumer marketplace for outdoor adventure products. For more information contact Jeanette Kosie at jkosie@travelmanitoba.com.

JANUARY 2011

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Manitoba voyageur

Manitoba Voyageur is produced by **Travel Manitoba** to keep industry informed about trends and events affecting the province's tourism industry.

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