



Three UNESCOs Journey Route Culinary Tourism Strategy



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	6
Culinary Tourism	10
Current State	26
Improving the Visitor Experience	45
Moving Forward	59
End Notes	63

Acknowledgements

We respectfully acknowledge the region for which this strategy was developed is the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk and recognize the island of Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) as the unceded, traditional territory of the Beothuk and the Mi'kmaq. We also acknowledge Labrador as the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Innu of Nitassinan, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut, and the Inuit of NunatuKavut.

We recognize all Indigenous peoples who were here before us, as well as those who live with us now, and the seven generations to come. As Indigenous peoples have done since time immemorial, we strive to be responsible stewards of the land and to respect the cultures, ceremonies, and traditions of all who call it home.

Through the combined efforts of several organizations, including the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, Indigenous Culinary of Associated Nations, Newfoundland and Labrador Indigenous Tourism Association, along with Indigenous tourism businesses, we are seeing Indigenous tourism and culinary tourism flourish. We look forward to seeing Indigenous culinary products and experiences elevate the tourism landscape of Newfoundland and Labrador, including the Three UNESCOs Journey Route, and Canada overall, in the years to come.

Photos courtesy of Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism, Western Destination Management Organization, Labrador Destination Management Organization

Three UNESCOs Journey Route Culinary Tourism Strategy would not have been possible without the time and energy offered by the Three UNESCOs Working Group. Thank you all for your energy and contributions. We would also like to thank everyone who participated in the industry questionnaire and the guided group survey. The strategy development process would not have been possible without you.

To the project team Juanita Ford at Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, and Carol-Ann Gilliard and John Angelopoulos at the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, thank you for your enthusiasm and dedication to this project.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without Connie Trombino and the generous support of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada!



The Culinary Tourism Alliance is a not-for-profit industry organization dedicated to bridging the gap between the food & drink and tourism industries. This report was prepared by Caroline Morrow, James Arteaga, Camilo Montoya-Guevara, Trevor Jonas Benson, and Nastasha Alli.



Red Bay Food Experience. © Tom Cochrane Photo. Courtesy of Go Western Newfoundland.



Introduction

Background

The Three UNESCOs Journey Route is comprised of three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, beginning at Gros Morne National Park in Western Newfoundland and makes its way north to L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site, before continuing across the Strait of Belle Isle to Red Bay National Historic Site in Labrador.

In 2019, the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) launched the Elevating Canadian Experiences (ECE) program. Through the program, the Three UNESCOs Journey Route was selected as one of four Canadian regions to pilot a culinary tourism strategy development process with the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA). This report lays out the direction that the Three UNESCOs Journey Route Working Group will take to improve the visitor experience along the route from 2021 to 2023.

- 1/ Develop a clear understanding** of how to grow culinary tourism along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route;
- 2/ Engage with the culinary tourism community** in a meaningful and considerate way, that takes into account the COVID-19 context;
- 3/ Increase understanding of culinary tourism** among a broader range of culinary and tourism partners;
- 4/ Increase understanding amongst culinary and tourism partners around the Three UNESCOs Journey Route** and how it can be enhanced through food and drink experiences; and
- 5/ Empower industry and the Three UNESCOs Working Group** to grow culinary tourism along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route.



Alignment

The strategy development process ran from October 2020 to March 2021, and the resulting strategy builds upon a foundation of existing work, including:

- The UNESCO Trilogy Itinerary Planning Website
- Three UNESCO Visitor Journey Assessment
- Western and Labrador Destination Development Plans
- Provincial Tourism Product Development Plan
- 5-Year Strategy Newfoundland and Labrador Indigenous Tourism Association (2019–2024)

Culinary Tourism



Norseman Restaurant

Culinary Tourism

Culinary tourism includes any tourism experience where a visitor interacts with food and drink that reflects the history, heritage, culture, and geography of a place. This includes agritourism, a subset of culinary tourism, that connects visitors to where their food comes from. Many experiences can simultaneously be categorized as culinary tourism and agritourism. Additionally, other types of alternative tourism like rural tourism, eco-tourism, cultural tourism, or outdoor tourism, are well positioned to connect to culinary tourism.

Foodways

The relationship between people, place, and food is called “foodways”. Foodways are the foundation of culinary tourism and addresses the who, what, where, when, why, and how around food becoming part of a community. These aspects lead back to the people of the place, and how their food cultures have shaped their landscapes, traditions, and livelihoods, including the methods, techniques and technologies used to harvest, trap, fish and preserve food and drink.

Tastes of place directly connect people to foodways. They are interactions that bring to life the story behind the food and drink of a place. Tastes of place can also include intangible elements such as rural hospitality, community feel, or good company. Through storytelling, foodways and tastes of place are tied together to make the connections between people, place and food clearer.

The Three UNESCOs Journey Route is connected to a large number of the unique, place-based foodways that visitors want to learn about. Diverse culinary assets along the route bring these local foodways to life including, Jigg's dinners, craft brewers, church suppers, restaurants, peatmoss gardens, retail stores, outfitters, wild berries, bed and breakfasts, partridgeberry martinis, tour operators, moose dishes, as well as local crab, partridgeberry or bakeapple festivals and events.





Culinary Tourism Value Chain

© Culinary Tourism Alliance

A wide variety of tourism businesses can use food and drink to elevate the visitor experience. In fact, any tourism-related business that includes a taste of place in its offering is part of the culinary tourism value chain. Below is a graphic representation of the culinary tourism value chain, which includes diverse businesses, ranging from retailers, to festivals, to accommodations.

It is important to consider the array of businesses within each business type that can bring different forms of capital to a partnership. Building on the culinary tourism value chain, business to business partnerships can foster innovation and creativity, while filling gaps in the visitor offering. Notably, partnerships help to root culinary tourism experiences to place, because the exact same combination of businesses working together is unlikely to exist in any other destination.



Culinary Tourists

Culinary tourists are “visitors who plan their trips partially or totally in order to taste the cuisine of a place.”¹ They plan some, but not all, trips around food and drink experiences. A key feature that sets culinary tourists apart is that they consider food and drink to be more than sustenance. Instead, they see food and drink to be something worth investing in. According to the UNWTO, culinary tourists have a “higher average expenditure, are demanding, and appreciative.”² Culinary tourists are motivated by experiential travel and include visitors looking to try local food at a restaurant, during an outdoor adventure tour, or participating in a cooking class.

When culinary tourists travel for other reasons, they look for ways to incorporate local tastes into their trip. For instance, a culinary tourist travelling for business may stop at a craft brewery, and a culinary tourist visiting family might incorporate an agricultural day trip into their itinerary. Culinary tourists want to connect meaningfully with the places they visit. Since culinary tourism is a subset of cultural tourism, many culinary tourists are also cultural tourists. These motivations and behaviours are important to keep in mind while planning for culinary tourism development along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route.

There are different types of culinary tourists. **Foodies** are motivated by the food itself or by experiences surrounding the food. **Food-connected consumers** make informed choices about their food and drink consumption, including the production processes behind it, but do not necessarily plan all trips around food. **Agritourists** seek “experiential, life-enriching vacations that involve culture, nature, the outdoors and learning.” Finally, **all tourists** eat, and there is an opportunity to enhance diverse experiences (e.g., hiking, climbing, fishing, boating, visiting cultural heritage sites, ferry rides, airport dining, roadside rest stops, etc.) and encourage localized spending through food and drink.

Relevant Tourism Trends

There are several noteworthy trends in tourism generally and in culinary tourism specifically, relevant to enhancing the visitor experience along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route, including purposeful travel, exploratory travel, sustainable destinations, rural tourism, and route-based itineraries.

Purposeful travel

For a growing number of visitors, learning is a key motivation for travel. When done right, culinary tourism experiences can be transformative for visitors and lead to personal growth. The transformative aspect comes in helping visitors have local experiences they could never access on their own, whether that's spending a day in someone's kitchen or participating in a church supper. Culinary tourism empowers locals to share their stories while presenting visitors with opportunities for learning and connection.

When thinking about culinary tourism development along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route, consider how culinary tourism offerings can deliver locally inspired learnings to inspire purpose-driven travellers. At the business level, this means providing visitors with experiences that foster personal growth, whether that's cooking classes, berry foraging, or fishing trips. Experiences that teach skills through meaningful connections to the local community are a key focus for culinary tourism experience development.

Exploratory travel

Travel to off-the-beaten-path destinations in search of unique experiences is a growing visitor demand. Visitors with this motivation like to feel that they are discovering something few others have experienced before. For them, VIP experiences are appealing. As a business, this means thinking about how local assets can help visitors understand that experiences along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route are tied to place and cannot be replicated anywhere else. For example, a takeaway picnic from a restaurant or retailer can be elevated with an insider recommendation for a lunch spot with a great view.

Sustainable destinations

A key strategic consideration for destinations is the extent to which they incorporate sustainability into their management and marketing efforts. Sustainability initiatives can take many forms- from banning single-use plastics to promoting locally owned businesses. As seen in the case study below, Tucson, Arizona showcases destination-wide efforts to build a stronger local food system and celebrate its food heritage. By letting prospective visitors know about sustainability initiatives, destinations can connect with travellers looking to go somewhere that aligns with their values. For some travellers, sustainability could play into their decision-making of what activities to do, where to stay, and what to eat.

The Three UNESCOs Journey Route has an opportunity to build awareness around the impact of (un)sustainable sourcing and harvesting practices on the local economic and socio-cultural wellbeing of communities. This may involve sharing stories about current initiatives and past difficulties related to these themes. At the business level, sustainable practices can be used to attract visitors, but every effort should be made to avoid green washing.

Rural tourism

Rural tourism often leans on the natural environment as a primary motivator for visitation and a point of differentiation from urban areas. For rural destinations, culture is usually a secondary asset that enables visitors to connect more deeply with place. Food and drink are important parts of cultural tourism. Small businesses, including accommodations, farms, and fishing businesses, can play an essential role in offering touchpoints to local food culture.

For rural destinations, linking culinary tourism to other forms of tourism, like rural tourism, outdoor tourism, ecotourism or cultural tourism, is a common approach to destination development. By forging clear links to the land, through ingredients and local traditions, culinary tourism is a natural add on to these tourism offerings. For the Three UNESCOs Journey Route, this means thinking about how rural landscapes, outdoor activities, access to the sea, and cultural heritage assets are incorporated into the visitor experience and how food and drink can be used to tell the diverse stories of the destination.

Canada's federal tourism strategy identifies tourism in rural and remote destinations as a primary developmental pillar for 2019 to 2021³. Dispersing visitors away from areas of critical mass combats the negative effects of overtourism, distributes economic, socio-cultural or environmental benefits, and can help restart the industry post-pandemic. Travellers interested in reducing overtourism may be open to lesser-known destinations if made aware of the positive impact that their visit can have on the destination community.



Route-based itineraries

Routes are an increasingly common way to link rural tourism assets, including culinary tourism assets. Routes sometimes operate under a collective brand or theme, including themes related to food and drink. Alternatively, food and drink can be incorporated into a route of any theme. Offering pre-made culinary tourism itineraries makes trip planning along routes easier. Similarly, blogs and articles are great ways to share trip inspiration and information with prospective visitors. Another tip is to indicate services that facilitate using alternative modes of transportation along the route, such as walking trails, cycling trails, camping sites, or motorcycle stops. For the Three UNESCOs Journey Route, enhancing the visitor experience along the route starts with simplifying the trip planning process and making it easier to incorporate memorable food and drink experiences throughout the entire route.



French Bread Oven – Port au Choix. © Tom Cochrane Photo. Courtesy of Go Western Newfoundland.

Case Studies

The below case studies showcase destinations that integrate local landscapes and foodways into culinary tourism development.

Östersund & Jamtland-Harjedalen, Sweden (pop: 50,000)

Östersund, located in the central Jamtland-Harjedalen Region of Sweden, is surrounded by natural landscapes and forms part of Saepmie, the land of the Indigenous Sami people, with 11 villages present in the region. In 2011, it was recognized by UNESCO as a City of Gastronomy⁴ and joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, which was launched in 2004 to promote cooperation amongst cities which recognized creativity as a major factor in their development.

The natural landscape is a key part of the area's value proposition. It connects visitors to the people, places and processes behind local food and drink. The area has primarily focused on its outdoor food and drink offerings. The urban centre promotes a self-guided tour that includes multiple restaurants focused on outdoor patio spaces, cafes, and specialty farms. The rural area promotes outdoor foraging and cooking with local chefs, cooking classes, tastings, self-guided and guided fishing and hunting adventures, moose tours, and sporting events such as Fjallmarathon and Arefjällen. Because many of the culinary tourism experiences are locally sourced, there are seasonal changes in the offerings that businesses can provide particularly during the winter months.

A noteworthy experience offered by the Sami people is a multi-day tour out on the land. As part of the tour, visitors follow the reindeer on snowmobiles or toboggans, and experience food & drink prepared the Sami way. Additionally, the national Swedish tourism organization has developed the Edible Country Tables experience⁵. This is a unique experience where visitors can book a picnic table online at no cost, selecting from multiple locations available throughout the country. The visitor downloads a prepared menu specific to the table selected. The visitor then forages and cooks all the ingredients needed to prepare the menu from the surrounding area. For an added cost, visitors can hire a local guide and chef to help forage and cook the gourmet meal.

The destination marketing organizations at the city and regional level work collaboratively to promote the food and drink products offered. Similar to the Three UNESCOs Journey Route, the region has a variety of foodways. The destination has focused on supporting culinary tourism businesses, including artisan food and drink craftpersons, to conserve the intangible cultural heritage of traditional food-making. Östersund & Jamtland-Harjedalen Region leads the area's food and drink initiatives through the collaboration of multiple organizations such as the destination marketing organizations and Eldrimner, the Swedish National Centre for Small Scale Artisan Food Processing.



Tucson, Arizona (pop: 545,000)

Tucson, located in the Sonoran Desert of Southern Arizona, is considered to be the oldest continuously inhabited and cultivated area in the United States.⁶ In 2015, Tucson became the first UNESCO City of Gastronomy⁷ designated in the United States.

The food heritage and diversity of foodways are key parts of the area's value proposition.

The area focuses on the unique food and drink developed over time, from the original Indigenous inhabitants to the arrival of the Spanish, and later Americans from the east coast. Some culinary tourism offerings include: festivals such as the Tucson Meet Yourself Festival, the Agave Heritage Festival, and the Savor Food & Wine Festival; bed & breakfasts; fine dining with live music; farmers' markets; farm-to-table or garden-to-table dining; food-related content in local museums such as the Presidio Museum; wild food & foraging tastings; food-related archaeological sites such as Los Morteros Conservation Area and the ancient Hohokam farm; beer flights and spirit samplings; cooking classes; multi-course small plate tastings; and food & drink pairings.



Many local businesses, products, and experiences showcase their connection to the cultural identity and natural landscape of the place by calling out the source of the local food and drink products; tying products or business names to place through an ode to local landmarks and attributes; using images on products that reflect landmarks or features; and describing the connection to the land for specific food tasting experiences such as foraging and wild food tastings.

In addition to the creative partnership of Tucson with UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, the area has been the main result of creative local partnerships that promote strong food systems between the local municipalities, local businesses, local community organizations, local Indigenous communities, the University of Arizona, and UNESCO. Many business-to-business partnerships have developed with the most common example being between breweries and food trucks. Food trucks are invited to the brewery patio spaces on a rotating basis to offer a diversity of food products to customers. Along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route, this kind of symbiotic partnership might include a chip shack collaborating with a beverage producer or event.

Current State



Point Amour Lighthouse Experience. © Tom Cochrane Photo. Courtesy of Go Western Newfoundland.

Three UNESCO World Heritage Sites

Gros Morne National Park, L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site, and Red Bay National Historic Site are anchors of the Three UNESCOs Journey Route. Each is recognized for the important natural or cultural heritage value that they bring. Gros Morne National Park is celebrated for its natural heritage value through a rare visible expression of continental drift. L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site's cultural heritage value relates to an 11th century Viking settlement and Red Bay National Historic Site's cultural heritage value is linked to the story of Basque mariners who founded a Whaling Station in the 1530s on Labrador's southern coast. The Journey Route is also home to the Inuit of NunatuKavut and Innu of Nitassinan in Labrador, and the Mi'Kmaq peoples of Newfoundland since time immemorial.⁸ In addition to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the Journey Route boasts a vast array of other national, provincial and local heritage sites that tell the stories of the area's diverse histories, including Battle Harbour National Historic District, and Point Amour Lighthouse Provincial Historic Site.



The three UNESCO sites are managed by Parks Canada and form part of the larger UNESCO World Heritage Network. A Three UNESCOs Working Group collaboratively grows and strengthens the Three UNESCOs Journey Route with the participation of key stakeholders at the federal, provincial and local levels, including:

- Parks Canada
- ACOA, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- Destination Labrador
- Go Western Newfoundland
- Gros Morne Cooperating Association (Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism)
- Viking Trail Tourism Association
- Deer Lake Regional Airport Authority
- Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador
- Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation and Department of Industry, Energy and Technology





Dark Tickle Co. - St. Lunaire. © Tom Cochrane Photo. Courtesy of Go Western Newfoundland.

In addition to the Working Group, other organizations working in the area can continue to support the growth of culinary tourism. For example, the Économusée International Network supports members in developing unique products connected to place and linked to traditional practices, such as artisanal wild berry picking and jam making. Économusée, along with other organizations like Parks Canada, local municipalities, other government departments, community groups, Indigenous communities, post-secondary institutions, and working group members have an opportunity to work together even more closely. By coordinating their combined knowledge, expertise, and resources they can use their networks to continue to build awareness of the region's rich foodways and grow the number of culinary tourism experiences along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route.

Local Foodways

The Three UNESCOs Journey Route region is home to diverse natural landscapes and an array of memorable vistas. From the mountains to the seashores, these landscapes have contributed to the rich local foodways in Western Newfoundland and the southern shores of Labrador. At the same time, the region has been shaped by the different peoples who have called this region home, and who brought their unique cultures, histories, and traditions. From Indigenous peoples, who have lived in the area since time immemorial, to the English, Acadian, and French settlers, to more recent immigration from different parts of the globe, the foodways of the Three UNESCOs Journey Route reflect this ever-changing relationship between peoples and cultures through the foods and beverages in the area. Some noteworthy food and drink experiences include, Boil-ups, bed and breakfasts, legion/church dinners, attractions, growers/producers, and community-focused festivals and events, including bakeapple, crab, and partridgeberry festivals, cookoffs, and food competitions.

In addition to this, the sea is a genuine connector that brings together the different peoples, places and food processes of the Three UNESCOs Journey Route. The sea links the stories of Indigenous Peoples at Port au Choix, the Viking at L'Anse aux Meadows, the Basque at Red Bay Whaling Station, and the more recent fishing history of the province. The sea has been a source of nourishment and a place of navigation for all of these peoples across time and geography. This is important context to consider when telling the stories of the foodways along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route.

Although there are many culinary tourism assets on the Three UNESCOs Journey Route, there are some barriers worth noting. Community festivals have limited capacity to expand, as most staff are volunteers. There are also limited options for dietary-conscious visitors, who require vegetarian, vegan, or gluten-free meals. Knowledge and awareness about local produce and ingredients by businesses and visitors is also limited. There is a lack of business access to local produce and ingredients during certain seasons, especially fresh seafood. It is important for growers, producers, and suppliers, such as farmers and fisherpersons in the region, as well as other culinary tourism business to build partnerships and grow their local supply chains to offer local food and drink. Through this, they not only reflect the region's foodways, but they also support other local businesses in the region. Additionally, it is important to support creative business ideas and entrepreneurship through enabling government regulations related to culinary tourism experience development (e.g., outdoor dining, alcohol permits, wild game, etc.) and providing clarity for businesses in the culinary tourism value chain around those policies that already exist.



What We Heard

The responses below are by no means a full list of all the excellent food and drink experiences and produce that are quintessential to the Three UNESCOs Journey Route. The list below highlights some of the experiences mentioned by industry members and key informants.

Experiences

- Visiting craft breweries
- Jigg's dinners
- Boil Ups
- Supper Clubs
- Visiting roadside peatmoss gardens
- Outdoor food experiences (festivals, campfires, foraging, picnics, "hike and taste" tours)
- Farm-to-table experiences
- Indigenous food experiences
- Multi-course dinners/picnics

Produce

- Wild berry products (e.g., bakeapple jam, partridgeberry jam, homemade pies)
- Fresh seafood
- Salted cod
- Moose and wild meats
- Fish and chips
- Baked goods



The Visitor

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the priority target market for the province is the non-resident Touring and Explorer market,⁹ made up of the Authentic Experiencers and Rejuvenators. They seek sightseeing and soft adventure experiences, such as cultural experiences, nature viewing, hiking, and wildlife watching.¹⁰ These visitors are described as 45 years or older and are primarily singles or couples without children at home.¹¹ They are well-educated and have a higher-than-average household income.¹² They are sophisticated and experienced travellers who do not see themselves as travellers. They seek off-the-beaten-track experiences where they can discover and experience the natural environment and authentic local culture.¹³ The Three UNESCOs Journey Route is well positioned to attract this target market with its variety of natural and cultural assets. When incorporated into the visitor offering, locally relevant food and drink can add value to cultural experiences and those connected to the natural environment.

In addition to this, over 81% of visitors to the province are Canadian, primarily from Ontario (50%), followed by the Maritimes, Alberta and British Columbia with Americans making up 13% of all visitors.¹⁴ Given recent changes in travel patterns related to COVID-19, Newfoundland and Labrador, including the Three UNESCOs Journey Route, are in a strong position to receive domestic travellers, while international travel restrictions and uncertainty around ever-changing regulations remain. According to the Canadian and Newfoundland and Labrador Resident Travel Attitudes 2020–2021 – Summary Infographics (2020), the province remains a highly desired tourist destination, having the highest share of any province or territory in the country with 43% of Canadian out-of-province travellers dreaming about visiting or returning to the province.¹⁵

Visitor Experience

Most out-of-province visitors to the Three UNESCOs Journey Route arrive through Deer Lake Regional Airport. Deer Lake is approximately one hour south from Rocky Harbour in Gros Morne National Park. Near Gros Morne National Park there are a wide variety of food and drink experiences. To a more limited extent, this is also true near L'Anse aux Meadows. However, the availability of food and drink visitor offerings along Route 430, between Gros Morne and L'Anse aux Meadows, is more limited with fewer visitor experiences that showcase local ingredients, recipes, traditions, or leverage the natural landscapes that surround the route. Additionally, there are few food and drink offerings connected to place at key access points, such as Deer Lake Regional Airport, the ferry station at St. Barbe and Blanc Sablon, the ferry boat, and vehicle rest stops along the route. It is important for the Three UNESCOs Journey Route Working Group to support industry in developing culinary tourism experiences, especially food service operations and pop-up experiences. Another priority is taking advantage of key access points to showcase regional food and drink – places where visitors linger for significant periods of time, such as ferry terminals, ferries, airports, and highway rest stops. These are excellent places to offer unique taste experiences.

Trip Planning

Trip planning for the Three UNESCOs Journey Route is facilitated by Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism's online itinerary planning tool. This tool supports visitors in developing personalized itineraries based on their interests. However, it is also important for culinary tourism businesses to use other online platforms. Visitors look to diverse platforms for inspiration around trip planning and for add-on activities while in the destination. Online platforms are excellent ways to promote culinary tourism businesses to visitors and to share the stories of the people, places and processes behind the businesses. Visitors want to travel to places that allow them to partake in something unique. Stories are powerful tools for making the value of local foodways clear to visitors.

Despite some infrastructure along the route, local wayfinding signage is limited. Wayfinding is particularly important in areas where cellphone service is limited. Additionally, limited capacity on the St. Barbe–Blanc Sablon ferry can result in long wait times for visitors. It is important that infrastructure catering to visitor needs along the route continue to be improved. This may include ensuring that ATMs are accessible and filled, encouraging operators to cater hours of operation to visitor needs (e.g., open for lunch, not just for dinner), helping businesses find seasonal staff, and supporting businesses to use online platforms or to adopt online booking systems.



French Bread Oven - Port au Choix. © Tom Cochrane Photo. Courtesy of Go Western Newfoundland.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many consumers are re-evaluating their priorities and looking for meaningful connections and learning opportunities. Visitors do not need to travel far to learn something new. People are looking for experiences closer to home that they may not have considered in the past. This means that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are seeking things to do around their home province, including culinary tourism experiences. As such, there is an opportunity for businesses to try something new and pilot pop-up experiences as part of their efforts to attract local visitors.

For the Three UNESCOs Journey Route, having offerings that appeal to locals and visitors alike is important, especially considering the limited tourism season. Local and provincial customers provide a customer base for businesses, the importance of which is even clearer with the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, when Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have personal memories of the Three UNESCOs Journey Route's culinary tourism experiences, the destination gains ambassadors who can recommend the route to family, friends and other connections.



Seaside Restaurant, Trout River

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges

This SWOC identifies the Three UNESCOs Journey Route's key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges for culinary tourism development.

Strengths

- Diversity of culinary tourism assets (e.g., peatmoss gardens, restaurants, Jigg's dinners, craft breweries, local festivals, etc.)
- An active Three UNESCOs Journey Route Working Group
- Common connection of three main UNESCO Heritage Sites to the sea
- Existing tools and resources available (A UNESCO Trilogy itinerary planning website, Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism)
- Well-established culinary tourism experiences in and around Gros Morne National Park, unique experiences in L'Anse aux Meadows and Red Bay
- Multiple food-related initiatives being piloted/implemented



Weaknesses

- Limited culinary tourism products connected to place, especially in the northern peninsula
- Short tourism season
- Limited access to fresh local produce, including seafood
- Limited industry capacity to integrate local food and drink into existing and new offerings
- Limited visitor-oriented services (e.g., store hours, wayfinding signage)
- Limited ferry service capacity



Opportunities

- Feature local food and drink products that reflect the foodways of the region
- Grow the locally sourced food and drink supply chain among culinary tourism businesses
- Grow awareness of and build capacity around culinary tourism experience development
- Support growth of online presence of culinary tourism businesses
- Grow Indigenous, and winter/shoulder season food and drink experiences
- Integrate food and drink into outdoor and cultural tourism
- Leverage existing culinary tourism assets
- Grow offering catering to on-the-go visitors
- Continue to grow the number of food offerings that reflect local foodways
- Grow marketing and promotion of culinary tourism, including blogs and listicles
- Leverage local food and drink to tell the diverse stories of the region
- Increase visitation along the Journey Route by locals and provincial tourists
- Grow partnerships with other organizations and networks



Challenges

- Visitor perception of long distance to Labrador
- Limited visitor-stay length
- Visitor perception of high-cost travel
- Slow recovery of non-resident tourism (COVID-19)
- Limited online presence of culinary tourism businesses
- Limited operator awareness about the benefits of culinary tourism
- Perceived sense of competition versus collaboration between different businesses/communities
- Limited industry awareness around integrating local food and drink into existing and new offerings
- Perceived limitations of government regulations
- Limited awareness around need to offer fresh local produce, including seafood
- Difficulty for operators to keep up with changing context of COVID-19 regulations
- Difficulties with staffing during tourism seasons

Improving the Visitor Experience





Regardless of the reason a visitor travels the Three UNESCO Journey Route, whether for outdoor activities, visiting family, or in search of cultural learnings, locally relevant food & drink can enhance the experience. The culinary tourism value chain is made up of an array of business types, it is important that these diverse businesses are made aware of the ways they can become involved in culinary tourism.

For example, offering food and drink that is connected to place at accommodations is an excellent way of exposing visitors to culinary tourism and connecting to other businesses in the area. Another example is providing a tasting experience while hiking, fishing, or hunting throughout the natural landscape, or selling local food and drink products, such as jams, teas, or honey, at a retail store, gas, or ferry station. These can all elevate the overall visitor experience. Similarly, cooking classes that use local ingredients and recipes connected to an exhibit at the local museum can add value to the cultural experience. Overall, food and drink can be integrated into virtually any tourism experience offered along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route. There is an opportunity to build strong partnerships that foster innovation and creativity around integrating food and drink to elevate the visitor experience.

STRATEGY

Recommendations for enhancing the Three UNESCOs Journey Route through culinary tourism can be grouped into three areas of opportunity: Industry Readiness; the Three UNESCOs Visitor Experience; and Experience Development. The specific recommendations within each of these areas are intended to guide immediate and short-term actions over the period 2021 to 2023.



Industry Readiness

Industry readiness is key to the success of any destination looking to develop culinary tourism. It makes it easier to integrate food and drink throughout the visitor journey. To grow culinary tourism, industry needs to understand how different types of businesses fit into the culinary tourism value chain, be aware of potential benefits and challenges to culinary tourism development and understand visitor expectations around this kind of tourism. This foundational work will help local businesses collaborate effectively to develop innovative and genuine culinary tourism experiences that fill gaps in the visitor offering.

1/ **Build capacity of culinary tourism operators** to ensure high quality visitor experiences

There are several areas of focus for industry capacity-building along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route. Of primary importance is clearly sharing the benefits of partnership development between culinary tourism businesses, organizations, and communities. Creative partnerships can help fill gaps in the visitor offering through innovative problem solving and resource-pooling to offer unique, locally inspired visitor experiences. Similarly, it is important to grow awareness amongst industry around the value of online storytelling and marketing to build visitor awareness of the culinary tourism experiences on offer. Other areas for capacity-building include, how to integrate food and drink into diverse business types, how culinary tourism can extend the tourism season and encourage visitor spend, as well as clarity around government regulations that impact culinary tourism, including serving regulations for alcohol, wild game, and food in outdoor settings. When businesses have a clear understanding of the regulations, the players involved, and the opportunities, they will be better equipped to meet these needs and requirements with the development of memorable food tourism experiences.

2/ **Support the development of innovative culinary tourism experiences** that respond to industry trends and fill gaps in the visitor offering

A first step to achieving this recommendation is providing training to businesses on current industry trends and gaps in the current route offering. One-on-one experience development support for businesses, tools and resources related to culinary tourism business opportunities, or industry workshops are some examples of how this training could be delivered. Supporting creative ideas, especially those that focus on business-to-business collaborations will help to grow culinary tourism. Innovative ideas can help to fill offering gaps and enhance the visitor experience. For example, pop-up culinary tourism experiences, catered fridge programs to stock local products in accommodations, takeaway picnic options from a restaurant, or increasing access to community-based culinary experiences like church suppers. These creative approaches would distinguish the Three UNESCOs Journey Route from other trails and increase opportunities for visitors to access locally relevant food and drink experiences along the entire route.

3/ **Facilitate industry networking opportunities**

Meet-and-greets, business-to-business familiarization visits across the region, industry newsletters, and online industry groups are some ways to increase industry connections. Partnerships between growers, producers, suppliers, farmers, fisherpersons and other culinary tourism businesses looking to source locally, can strengthen local supply chains and improve visitor access to local food and drink. At the same time, growing industry networks fosters collaboration and coordination, over competition. This recommendation encourages a coordinated regional approach to experience development that ensures a geographic and seasonal dispersion of culinary tourism products offered along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route.

The Three UNESCOs Visitor Experience

The Three UNESCOs visitor experience begins before the visitor arrives to the region and can extend after they return home through photos and memories. Easy online trip-planning of culinary tourism experiences, taste of place experiences at key access points, recommendations from local residents, knowing about the region's designations and partnerships, and learning about local foodway stories online and in person, will foster a visitor's sense of immersion along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route.

4/ Continue to improve online assets to enhance the visitor journey

Culinary tourism businesses need to grow their online presence on key platforms used by travellers to build awareness about current food and drink offerings. For businesses, an improved online presence also includes, posting menus online, identifying local partnerships on websites, and encouraging user-generated content on social media. At the destination level an improved online presence includes, developing pre-made culinary tourism itineraries that are downloadable offline and increasing the number of blogs and articles that describe the experiences of eating and drinking along the route. A stronger online presence increases prospective visitor awareness of existing food and drink experiences along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route, which inspires visitation for those with an interest in food and drink, and makes it simpler to integrate these into visitor itineraries.

5/ Work with operators to activate key access and transportation points with culinary tourism

Key entrance and exit points along the region are excellent locations to offer a taste of place experience and elevate the overall journey route. Ways to do this include, offering local dishes or locally sourced lunches at the airport, a food tasting or pop-up restaurant at the ferry terminals, local snacks on the ferry or pop-up shops at rest stops. Such initiatives activate functional spaces along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route and add value to the visitor experience.

6/ Foster ambassadorships by encouraging residents to participate in culinary tourism activities

One way that visitors adapt their trips is through recommendations they receive from locals. At the business level, ambassadorship involves supporting other local businesses through cross promotion and word-of-mouth recommendations. For this reason, it is important to build awareness among local residents and business owners about the many unique culinary tourism experiences available along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route. Marketing to local residents and encouraging them to participate in culinary tourism experiences will foster that sense of immersion and interconnectedness along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route. Similarly, targeting visitors from elsewhere in the province means that the destination will be top of mind when Newfoundlanders and Labradorians make recommendations to visiting friends and family about where to go in the province.

7/ Continue to leverage designations and partnerships to activate the Three UNESCOs Journey Route

It is important to leverage unique designations by well-known organizations as a point of differentiation from other regions. Celebrating partnerships with Parks Canada, UNESCO, and Économusée will build a stronger local network connected to the international community. They will also support awareness building around culinary tourism development and elevate the Three UNESCOs visitor experience.

8/ Focus marketing efforts on local foodway stories that connect visitors to place

Ensuring that the ingredients, foods, and dishes featured along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route are connected to place and that the stories of these connections are genuine, will amplify the unique visitor experience along the route. Fortunately, the Three UNESCOs Journey Route region is home to an incredibly rich selection of foodway stories determined by, amongst other factors, immigration patterns, local landscapes, food production and harvesting, and the region's economic context over time. Telling these stories through marketing efforts will help prospective visitors feel connected to the destination.

The sea is one example of a genuine connecting factor that transcends time, culture and space. Indigenous peoples, the Vikings, the Basque, and contemporary Newfoundlanders and Labradorians all have ties to the sea. This connection is seen through common links to the sea as a place of nourishment and navigation.



Experience Development

Experience development that highlights the unique foodways of the region, fills offering gaps, and integrates food and drink into outdoor and cultural tourism experiences, will increase the opportunities for visitors to have a taste of place experience along the Three UNESCOs Journey Route.

9/ Prioritize experience development that highlights unique local foodways

Experience development that highlights unique foodways along the route includes, eating a Jigg's dinner, while hearing its origin story; having a meal at a restaurant, while learning about the people behind the local ingredients; doing a guided foraging walk with storytelling around traditional recipes; having a craft beverage at a brewery, while learning about the making process; harvesting herbs from a peatmoss garden and using these in a cooking class; purchasing local jams and produce at a retail store, while learning about the providers; hearing about the traditions behind a local community festival, while trying a local dish; or learning about the myths and legends of local fisherpersons, while participating in a fishing trip. The integration of storytelling and foodways into these experiences ensure a place-based uniqueness that cannot be replicated anywhere else.

10/ Explore the development of pop-up tourism experiences to fill gaps in the visitor offering

Pop-up tourism experiences offer a flexible, lower risk, opportunity for entrepreneurs to test new experiences to a visitor-facing audience. At the same time, they can fill gaps in the route offering, both geographically and thematically. Pop-up experiences could include visitors eating a meal at a family home or legion hall, attending a local event at the local community centre, offering a taste experience at a vehicle rest stop, gas station or cultural heritage site, or participating in a foraging, harvesting or outdoor cooking activity with local residents. These experiences will add a personalized touch to the visitor's experience and connect them to local residents. Challenges around connecting visitors to these kinds of experiences can be overcome by leveraging existing platforms that visitors already use.

11/ Help businesses integrate food and drink into outdoor and cultural tourism experiences to create memorable place-based offerings

Supports such as fostering connections between industry and offering training opportunities on building collaborative experiences, will ensure a higher chance that visitors leave the Three UNESCOs Journey Route with memorable taste of place experiences. Outdoor tourism experiences that showcase the region's landscapes, flora, and fauna can be elevated with food and drink connected to place. Offering a picnic lunch with local products adds value to a hike. Similarly, telling stories of community-based food production and offering local tastes can add a multisensory element to cultural tourism experiences.



Strategy Overview

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY	ACTIONS
Industry Readiness (Year 1, Year 2)	1 - Build capacity of culinary tourism operators to ensure high quality visitor experiences
	2 - Support the development of innovative culinary tourism experiences that respond to industry trends and fill gaps in the visitor offering
	3 - Facilitate industry networking opportunities
The Three UNESCOs Visitor Experience (Year 1, Year 2)	4 - Continue to improve online assets to enhance the visitor journey
	5 - Work with operators to activate key access and transportation points with culinary tourism
	6 - Foster ambassadorship by encouraging residents to participate in culinary tourism activities
	7 - Continue to leverage designations and partnerships to activate the Three UNESCOs Journey Route
	8 - Focus marketing efforts on local foodways stories that connect visitors to place
Experience Development (Year 2)	9 - Prioritize experience development that highlights unique local foodways
	10 - Explore the development of pop-up tourism experiences to fill gaps in the visitor offering
	11 - Help businesses integrate food and drink into outdoor and cultural tourism experiences to create memorable place-based offerings

Moving Forward

With its rich diversity of local foodways, the Three UNESCOs Journey Route region is well-positioned to leverage culinary tourism.

Culinary tourism can be integrated with different forms of tourism, including outdoor and cultural tourism, to enhance the visitor experience using multisensory connections to place. As a result, culinary tourism offers opportunities for diverse businesses, institutions, organizations, and communities to participate.

The Three UNESCOs Journey Route Working Group is invested in supporting the continued growth and development of culinary tourism along the route. Since culinary tourism is a community experience, this process will also require the involvement of industry, community members, and organizations across the region. By harnessing the areas of opportunity outlined in this report including, Industry Readiness, Three UNESCOs Visitor Experience, and Experience Development and collaboratively acting on related recommendations, the destination can grow culinary tourism, celebrate its rich local foodways and enhance the overall visitor experience along the route.

Moving forward, there is a tremendous opportunity to leverage local foodways to tie food and drink into a wide variety of tourism touchpoints, including collaborative, gap-filling tourism experiences that have yet to be developed!



Notes

¹ UNWTO. (2012). Global Report on Food Tourism: AM Reports Volume 4. Accessed Nov. 4, 2019 from <http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/amreports4-foodtourism.pdf>

² UNWTO. (2012). Global Report on Food Tourism: AM Reports Volume 4. Accessed Nov. 4, 2019 from <http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/amreports4-foodtourism.pdf>

³ Innovation Government of Canada, "Creating Middle Class Jobs: A Federal Tourism Growth Strategy," Landing Pages, 2019, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/134.nsf/eng/00003.html>, 12.

⁴ UNESCO Creative Cities Network (n.d.). "Östersund". <http://creativegastronomy.com/ccn/project/ostersund/>

⁵ Visit Sweden (n.d.). "The Edible Country". <https://ediblecountry.visitsweden.com/en/#tables>

⁶ Visit Tucson (2020). "Tucson History". <https://www.visittucson.org/travel-trade/tour-ideas/half-day-itineraries/tucson-history#:~:text=Early%20History%20of%20the%20Tucson%20Area&text=Tucson%20is%20the%20largest%20city,for%20at%20least%2010%2C000%20years.>

⁷ UNESCO (n.d.). "Tucson: City of Gastronomy". <https://tucson.cityofgastronomy.org/>

⁸ CES (2019). 5-Year Strategy: Newfoundland & Labrador Indigenous Tourism Association 2019-2024, Pg. 2

⁹ Newfoundland and Labrador (n.d.). Tourism Marketing Strategy. Accessed Jan. 15, 2021 from <https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcar/tourism-division/marketing/tourism-marketing-strategy/>

¹⁰ Newfoundland and Labrador (n.d.). Tourism Marketing Strategy. Accessed Jan. 15, 2021 from <https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcar/tourism-division/marketing/tourism-marketing-strategy/>

¹¹ Newfoundland and Labrador (n.d.). Tourism Marketing Strategy. Accessed Jan. 15, 2021 from <https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcar/tourism-division/marketing/tourism-marketing-strategy/>

¹² Newfoundland and Labrador (n.d.). Tourism Marketing Strategy. Accessed Jan. 15, 2021 from <https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcar/tourism-division/marketing/tourism-marketing-strategy/>

¹³ Newfoundland and Labrador (n.d.). Strategic Marketing Approach. Accessed Jan. 15, 2021 from <https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcar/tourism-division/marketing/strategic-marketing-approach/>

¹⁴ Newfoundland and Labrador (n.d.). Tourism Marketing Strategy. Accessed Jan. 15, 2021 from <https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcar/tourism-division/marketing/tourism-marketing-strategy/>

¹⁵ Newfoundland and Labrador (2020). Canadian and Newfoundland and Labrador Resident Travel Attitudes 2020-2021 – Summary Infographics. Accessed Feb. 12, 2021 from https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcar/files/ca_nl_res_travsentiment.pdf