

# REALITY CHECK



## TOURISM

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Tourism is an important economic driver for Sault Ste. Marie. There are over 1,500 tourism related businesses in the region employing thousands of people. In 2014 over 1.7 million visitors were attracted, spending over \$228M.

Beyond the direct annual spend, the tourism industry invests in new developments and upgrades in the community, helping establish a better quality of life for residents. Developments such as Searchmont Resort, the HUB Trail, Essar Centre, Northern Community Centre, Heritage Discovery Centre, Parks Canada Canal, the Lake Huron North Channel Cycling Route, were all built with tourism values, but benefit visitors and residents alike. Attracting major sporting events and conventions to the city help to inject significant spending in the community, but also help offset operating costs of many municipal facilities.

From 2008 – 2016 Sault Ste. Marie has hosted 442 conventions/sports events, bringing 78,952 delegates, providing a direct spend in the community of over \$40.67M.

From 2008 – 2016 Tourism Sault Ste. Marie sold 47,322 2 and 3 day packages through its online reservation system, generating over 100,000 visitor days, and providing a direct spend in the community of over \$12.7M.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**OVER 1,500**  
TOURISM-RELATED  
BUSINESSES  
IN THE REGION

**\$228M**  
ANNUAL  
DIRECT SPEND  
BY VISITORS

## WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?

- Since 2016, there has been a steady increase of U.S. residents visiting Ontario. There are now almost 200 million Americans holding Passports, giving them the ability to travel freely to Canada. This augers well for Sault Ste. Marie, that historically has benefitted from strong visitation from residents of border U.S. states.
- Both the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership and Destination Canada are re-investing into the U.S. market, developing initiatives that TSSM will be able to partner with, to increase travel from this key market
- Agawa Canyon Tour Train (key attraction) rider levels continue to grow each year since 2011
- There is a trend among travellers to learn about heritage and culture. Sault Ste. Marie is well positioned to capture this audience segment, with significant investments at the Parks Canada Canal; the Ermatinger-Clergue National Historic Site, with the Heritage Discovery Centre; The Machine Shop; upgrades to the Canadian Bushplane Heritage Museum, and the development of products around the Group of 7.
- Connectivity to the Algoma Region and the north shore of Lake Superior also make Sault Ste. Marie a key gateway for outdoor vacation opportunities, including fishing, hiking, canoe/kayak, camping and scenic driving tours.

## WHAT'S NEW?

In recent years, the tourism industry, led by the private sector have invested heavily in new developments or major capital upgrades, including:

- \$11.2 million in upgrades to the Agawa Canyon Tor Train, in the form of new passenger coaches and onboard audio/video system
- \$35 million in new accommodation builds and major renovations to existing properties
- Development of the HUB Trail and Lake Huron North Channel Cycling Route
- Cultural asset upgrades: Parks Canada Canal, Ermatinger-Clergue National Historic Site Heritage Discovery Centre, Canadian Bushplane Heritage Centre, Machine Shop
- Major sports infrastructure investments: Essar Centre, Northern Community Centre, George Leach Centre and the Sault College Health and Wellness Centre, Searchmont Resort

## INTERESTING FACTS:

**SINCE 2016**



THERE HAS BEEN A **STEADY INCREASE**  
OF U.S. RESIDENTS VISITING ONTARIO

## WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- Build the tourism profile and align from within the community and look at future municipal developments through a tourism lens, so as to attract increased visitors as well as augment the quality of life for residents.
- The City of Sault Ste. Marie needs to continue to invest in culture, heritage, arts and recreational infrastructure.
- As an organization, TSSM will continue to focus on key Strategic Developments in the areas of Attractions Packaging, Conventions/Sports Tournaments, and linkages to world class outdoors.
- A focus on product development in the areas of culture, heritage and the arts
- Secure ongoing operations of the region's key attraction – The Agawa Canyon Tour Train

**OVER**  
  
**1.7 MILLION**  
**VISITORS**  
**IN ONE YEAR**

**SSM HOSTED**  
**442**  
**CONVENTIONS**  
**& SPORTS EVENTS**  
**FROM 2008–2016**