Chapter 17

What You Have: Comprehensive Inventory of Tourism Resources and Assets

Every Community Needs to Know What it Has

So often we hear communities that want to expand tourism lament, believing they don't have enough attractions to compare with New York, Las Vegas, or the nearest large city.

Be assured, big city resources are not needed. Today's visitors are seeking authenticity, interesting stories, and smaller places to relax and enjoy. Every small town, small city, and rural community has tourism resources and assets because at a minimum, each area has unique heritage and culture. Plus, visitors will travel as much as 20-30 miles from a hub to explore a location they're interested in, putting all the attractions, activities, and resources within that radius in reach. Most importantly, a comprehensive inventory of all tourism resources and assets can reveal massive opportunities.

A comprehensive inventory of the 30-mile radius surrounding two tiny towns in Idaho revealed they were located right at the edge of a Gold Level Dark Skies Preserve, had a Professional Circuit Rodeo, a National Monument, and Borah Peak, the highest mountain peak in Idaho that is on the bucket list of many mountain climbers, right down the road. And inventory for a small historic town in Pennsylvania revealed that in addition to a small collection of resources right in town, it was surrounded by 300 historic locations within the 30-mile radius! A Scenic Byway in far Northern California has 1269 visitor facing locations in 21 rural communities. An inventory of the rural area in Upstate New York with history dating to the early 1600s, revealed 1138 visitor facing locations within an area that lies between the triangle of three cities.

Every community needs to know what it has to attract and serve visitors and thoroughness is key. And, in addition to interesting places to visit, overnight visitors require access to the same types of services they have at their home location, places to sleep, places to eat, places to shop for what they might need or want, the availability of health care should that need arise, automobile service stations and car repair services, should those needs arise, plus the availability of a bank and ATM.

Compiling the Inventory

It's important to start with a clean slate and a fresh set of eyes, and record EVERY location within a 30-mile radius that can contribute to visitor experiences. Detailed research in an area that has not previously completed an inventory most often reveals an area replete with attractions. These resources are often connected by scenic byways, heritage corridors, and historic trails that serve as economic drivers in their own right, or at least, scenic drives that make the routes in between very pleasant. This is especially true in areas where significant attractions are paired with very limited accommodations capacity, fewer dining options, and general lack of specialty retail resulting in many good opportunities being overlooked.

If, like so many communities dipping their toes into tourism waters, the concentration has been on outdoor recreation, it is very important to look at cultural and heritage locations in and around the community since these visitors illustrated to these locations have completely different and generally higher spending patterns than outdoor recreation visitors. In addition, a more refined assessment of outdoor recreation niches may also yield new target markets, such as more generic hikers in addition to mountain climbers, cross-country skiers in

addition to, or in place of, traditional skiers, mountain bikers who are always seeking new places to ride, and pleasure drivers who seek out new scenic routes.

Ironically, many DMMOs which are membership based don't know the full scope of the resources and assets in their communities, since most have only 10%-25% of the locations as members. Over the years, businesses come and go, new restaurants pop up, new recreation facilities are built, and some locations with limited budget do not sign on as members. Being completely knowledgeable about all the available resources and assets is the only way a DMMO can serve as the premier visitor information resource for today's visitor. If they come upon something that interests them and they don't see it on the website, tourism get points off in their mind. Plus, experience shows that what is revealed can change everyone's perspective of the potential for tourism. Inclusion of "the rest" can make a community look very different, with a very different personality.

Collection of the Information

Since the available resources and assets determine the visitor markets a community can attract, it is essential to diligently collect all the information. A simple, well organized spreadsheet will work fine at first. Once the resources and assets have been incorporated in a spreadsheet and organized with one category per tab, couple it with a Google map, to see the relationships between the various places. Include complete contact information such as street address, phone, and email to use the database to communicate with each location as the program evolves, as well as hours of operation to illustrate the patterns of visitation available to visitors. Also add whether or not the location is "visitor ready," and make provision to include a description and image at a later date.

If you feel like you're using resources from neighboring locations, no worries, everybody does it to expand their visitor offerings as much as possible. A complete inventory enables you to expand tourism offerings further by combining locations into pre-designed experiences, thematic trails, walking tours, detailed itineraries, scenic drives and more. A good example of dividing resources into categories is a destination in California that when the whole list was assembled, had 53 RV parks, but was not promoting the location to RV travelers. Only by compiling all the locations was this resource and opportunity revealed.

Refining the Information

Each of the entries in categories such as restaurants, should be further tagged to allow organization of the material into cuisine types, locations, service types and so on, because visitors have become accustomed to searching not just for a restaurant, but for one of the right type of food, in the right location, and the right service level they are seeking. The same goes for hotels and other accommodations. The more finely sorted, categorized, and organized the inventory, the more useful it is and the most informative it will be, when the information is ultimately displayed to visitors. Providing comprehensive and detailed information will go a long way to establishing the perception that the DMMO is working to be as helpful as possible to both visitors and marketing partners.

An inventory of EVERY location of interest to visitors in the region will:

(1) illustrate the scope and scale of exactly what is available to promote;

(2) Illustrate the relative strength of each resource and asset category;

(3) Illustrate the locations available to be combined during experience
     development

(4) Deliver the essence of the destination to develop an authentic identification.

To be most valuable, the inventory has to be complete, comprehensive, accurate, and well organized, because it also serves as the foundation for targeting visitors and a new marketing plan. The lists of resource types that appear below are not intended to be exhaustive. They are only meant to prompt a thorough search for any and all possibilities that exist.

Heritage and Historic Resources

Begin the inventory with a look at the available heritage and historic resources in the region. The difference between ability of history and heritage resources to attract visitors, and those which don't, is how they are expressed. In locations where they are well expressed, the history and heritage tells a story that can easily be complemented with relevant artifacts and images. Others locations are dark, musty, disorganized places filled with whatever someone wanted to donate. It is very important to evaluate each historic site and heritage location in terms of quality, and be brutally honest about what will make it most appealing to visitors.

Examples of historic resources include:

Archeological Digs	History Museums
Archeological Museums	Historic Ships
Castles	Historic Sites
Cemeteries	Historical Societies
Covered Wagon Tours	National Monuments
Historic Buildings	National Parks
Historic Districts	Paleontological Digs

Historic Homes

Historic Mansions

Historic Farms

Pictographs and Petroglyphs

Historic Churches

Examples of heritage resources include:

Antique Shops	Language Immersion Tours
Literary Tours	Heritage Railroads
Folklore Exhibits	Lighthouse Tours
Food Halls and Markets	Living History Museums
Ghost Towns	Living History Villages
Gold Panning	Military History Tours
Heritage and Cultural Centers	Native American Heritage Museums
Heritage Corridors	Native American Heritage Tours
Heritage Education Centers	Outdoor Museums
Heritage Museums	Quilting Exhibits
Specialized Heritage Tours	

Culture and Arts

Cultural resources express a region's creativity. Art museums and galleries are complemented with art walks, artisan demonstrations, behind the scenes tours, and art center presentations, crafts, cultural festivals, performing arts include theater, films, and more.

Examples of arts resources include:

Architecture Tours	Artists Workshops
Art Centers	Artist Studios
Art Collections	Craft Trails
Art Councils	Craft Shops
Art History Tours	Outdoor Art
Art Institutes	Painting Workshops
Art Museums	Photography Tours
Art Galleries	Photography Workshops
Art Trails	Sculpture Parks

Art Walks   Specialty Museums

Artist Demonstrations   Textile Tours

Examples of cultural resources include:

Beverage Trails   Gourmet Food Tours

Choral and Choruses   Libraries

Culinary Exhibitions   Music Halls

Culinary Schools   Music Parks

Culinary Trails   Opera Companies

Cultural Districts   Outdoor Entertainment

Cultural Expeditions   Science Centers

Concert Venues   Science Museums

Dance Performances   Symphony Orchestras

Film Presentations   Theatres

Garden Tours   Visitor Centers

Outdoor Resources

Outdoor resources come in two categories: those that are observed, and those visitors actively participate in.

Examples of observational resources include:

Arboretums   Planetariums

Aviaries   Preserves

Botanical Gardens   Rail Trails

Butterfly Habitats   Scenic Byways

Canyons   Scenic Drives

Community Parks   Scenic Overlooks

Mountains   Specialty Gardens

Municipal Forests

National Forests   Ski Areas

National Parks   State Forests

National Wildlife Refuges   State Parks

Nature Trails   Zoos

Observatories   Piers and Boardwalks

NATIONAL
TRAVEL CENTER

Examples of outdoor activity resources include:

Abseiling	Horseback Riding
Aerobics	Hunting
Backpacking	Ice Climbing
Ballooning	Kite Flying
Bicycle Touring	Kayaking
Bird Watching	Mountain Climbing
Butterfly Watching	Overlanding
Bungee Jumping	Paragliding
Camping	River Rafting
Canoeing	Rock Climbing
Cattle Drives	Running/Jogging
Caving	Sailing
Diving	Scuba/Snorkeling
Ecotourism	Sea Kayaking
Environmental Education	Skiing
Equestrian Tours	Snowboarding
Fishing	Snowshoeing
Foliage Tours	Surfing
Fox Hunting	Surfing
Hang Gliding/Soaring	Swimming
Health and Fitness Tours	Tennis
Heli-rafting	Trekking
Heli-Skiing	Walking Tours
Heli-Trekking	Waterskiing
Hiking	Windjamming
Windsurfing	Photography
ATV Riding	Angling
Archery	Aviation
Base jumping	Canyoning
Clam digging	Coasterring
Cross country skiing	Cycling
Fly fishing	Gardening
Geocaching	Heli-trekking
Hot Air Ballooning	Ice Fishing
Ice Skating	Jet skiing
Kicksledding	Letter boxing
Mountain biking	Mountaineering

Off-roading	Paddle boarding
Parasailing	Rapelling
Safaris	Skateboarding
Sport fishing	Sky diving
Sledding	Snowmobiling
Windsurfing	Water skiing
Zip lining	

Examples of indoor sports include:

Indoor Sports

Ballroom Dancing	Handball
Bowling	Hockey
Curling	Roller Skating
Gymnastics	Squash

Activity and Entertainment Locations

This category is vastly varied, including but not limited to:

Air Shows	Hot Springs Bathing
Adventure Parks	Golf
Boat Rides	Jeep Safaris
Brew Tasting	Motorcycle Touring
Casino Gambling	Mountain Bike Touring
Distillery Spirits Tasting	NASCAR
Flightseeing	Rodeos
Glamping	Spas
Helicopter Tours	Sports Camps
Holistic Wellness Tours	Water Cruises
Wine Tasting	

Farm-based Tourism

Agricultural museums	Animal feeding
Animal husbandry	Animal petting
Antique tool demonstrations	Apple bobbing
Archery	Beekeeping demonstrations

- Breadmaking
- Canning
- Cattle roundup
- Cider pressing
- Country cooking classes
- Corn shucking
- Craft classes
- Display gardens
- Farm camp
- Farm gift shop and store
- Fishing
- Flower farm events and workshops
- Garden demonstrations
- Guided hunts
- Harvesting crops
- Hayrides
- Horseback riding and lessons
- Living history farm demonstrations
- Living history farm re-enactments
- Pumpkin painting and carving
- Rodeo
- Soap making
- Sheep shearing
- U-Pick flowers, fruit and vegetables
- Weed identification
- Wildlife viewing
- Wine tasting and tours
- Wreath making

- Candle making
- Cattle branding demonstrations
- Cheese making
- Conservation technology demonstrations
- Corn maze
- Cowboy poetry
- Dairy demonstrations
- Dude ranch activities
- Farmers markets
- Farm to table dining
- Flour milling
- Food preparation demonstrations
- Garden tours
- Guided recreation
- Hay rides
- Horseback trail riding
- Pack trips
- Petting zoo
- Planting demonstrations g
- Quilting
- Shooting range
- Square dancing
- Trap and skeet shooting
- Weaving
- Wilderness experiences
- Wine making
- Wool spinning

Events

Events comes in all shapes and sizes:

Agricultural Exhibitions	Folk Festivals
Brewfests	Heritage Festivals
Cultural Festivals	Wine Festivals

Visitor Service Locations

In addition to attractions and activities, every location has at least some visitor service locations such as accommodations, restaurants, retail shops, and other services that visitors may need while they are visiting.

Accommodations

Destination Distinctive Accommodations

Chain Hotels

Bed and Breakfast Inns

Historic Inns

Campgrounds

Resorts

Specialty Resorts

Conference Facilities

Meeting Locations

Ski Resorts

Farm Stays

RV Parks

Dining

Destination Distinctive Dining

Fine Dining

Casual Dining

Carry Out

Food Trucks

Cafes

Bakeries

American Cuisine

Mexican Cuisine

International Cuisine

And more

Nightlife

Bars

Bistros

Theater

Retail

Destination Distinctive Retail

Antique Shops

Vintage Shops

Farmers Markets

Grocery Stores

Boutiques

Auto Related Services

Filling Stations

Automobile Garages

Life Happens

Medical Clinics

Banking

Hospital Care

Pharmacies

Urgent Care

A well constructed comprehensive inventory serves several purposes:

1. Targeting visitor markets, since the most effective marketing promotes the areas resources and assets to visitors who will be most interested in them.

2. Development of the destination's story, which must springboard out of the assets and resources to make the story come alive.

3. Proving economic impact when the percentage of revenue that is generated by visitors for each of the businesses in the inventory is compiled and presented collectively.

4. Marketing partner recruitment since every business and location in the inventory is a potential DMMO member or marketing partner.

5. The basis of new thematic, heritage and other trails, tours and more to expand tourism offerings.

6. A comprehensive presentation of all the tourism resources and assets in the area to both visitors and the locals on the website.

Asset Mapping

An increased visitor pool will have an influence on the community in a number of ways. Asset mapping, the practice of clustering resources and assets on a map, will illustrate where increased visitor activity will have the most impact, enable a clear understanding where clusters of both attractions and visitor service businesses are located, where collections of like types of resources are located, and how the relationships between resources and assets can be used to advantage in developing new tourism offerings. Clusters also make clear where traffic problems and other challenges are going to occur. Clear asset maps also illustrate where the

deficiencies in visitor services occur, providing the basis for future planning to better accommodate tourism.

To start the asset mapping process, assign each of the categories in the database with a different symbol and color, and create a layer for each of these categories, as well as a combined map that illustrates all of the locations in the database at once. Creating the maps can be as simple as using Google mapping, or one of the more sophisticated program. The point is having clear information, not complex technology.