

Putting Heads in Country Beds



Keynote speaker: Pamela Lanier, author of 15 travel titles in over 120 editions and translations, is the founder of *B&Bs, Inns and Guesthouses International* and established the TravelGuides.com network. She's a passionate advocate for small and medium-sized lodgings. See more at Pamelalanier.com.

Trends that favour the B&B industry in North America

Short vacations - Shorter holidays tend to favour the B&B industry. People are taking ever-shorter trips in North America, often a driving trip, often a getaway that's three or four hours' drive away.

Baby Boomers taking their families travelling – Boomers are taking their children and grandchildren on the road to show them this wonderful country. Some places are set up ideally to host families – a family room is really helpful and a great attraction for families.

Golden Agers – active retirees - Golden guests are really fuelling B&B prosperity, travelling happily while they still have the time and health. They are easy guests, stay longer, and fuel the local economy by buying gifts for family and friends.

Sophistication – Many people travel the world, creating an experienced, sophisticated traveller base.

Great Manitoba Initiatives according to Pam

EQ - Check out Explorer Quotient at <http://caen.canada.travel/ConsumerWeb/EQQuiz.page>

B&B MB brochure - Pam compliments B&B MB for their brochure: 5,000 copies, widely distributed. "Because people still read. And people like to read while they're travelling and they pick things up."

Innovative publicity - *The Cinnamon Bun Trail – In search of sweet treats across rural Manitoba* – produced jointly by five Manitoba Tourism Associations (Parkland, North, Interlake, Eastern, Central Plains) with Travel Manitoba. A great idea! See it at

http://admin.getawaysinmanitoba.ca/FileUpload/region1/files/cinnamon_bun_trails_2012_brochure.pdf

Signage - Evergreen Gate's 'official highway sign' cost \$1,000 upfront, a lot! but is maintained by the Province. B&Bs should look into this. European visitors like to make a last-minute choice and just get off the road when they see a sign.

Inclusiveness - Pam complimented the B&B conference organizers for providing sign language translations for participants at this conference.

IDEAS FOR MARKETING IN RURAL AREAS

Reach out to potential guests in your area – Think businesses, conferences, training centres, etc.

Use natural contacts from organizations that you belong to.

Turn lemons into lemonade - Take what could be a problem and turn it into an asset.

Put your passions to work and offer more than just accommodation – Turn your interest into a feature!

If what you offer is just accommodation – price yourself appropriately - Establish a good reputation with reasonable rates, comparing yourself to every other lodging in the area. Give value, and actively market with every guest.

Advertise on your person – Idea - wear matching polo shirts bearing your B&B logo and name, but not the address, so people have to ask where you are located; and always carry brochures, cards, and pens with all your contact info.

Advertise wherever you can - Truck mud flaps? The side of your vehicle?

Make your inn as effective as possible to keep your occupancy at the point where *you* want it to be – so you can *choose* to be less busy, rather than scrambling to be more busy.

Know your guests' EQ and where your guests are coming from.

Keep your guest list up to date in a format you can use. Go over your guest list and analyze it.

Make a calendar, and highlight special events in your community

- Consider annual national holidays.
- Ask the Chamber of Commerce - are there festivals or conferences planned? a music festival?
- Check with local churches, hospitals, other organizations etc., for events, and people who might be coming in?

Then ***make a blueprint*** of where your marketing efforts should go.

Market, market, market, even if you hate it. Some innkeepers hate to market. So make it doable. Break it down. Every day, do just one little thing.

- Make the calendar your main thing to-do.
- Communicate with your guest list at least quarterly. Send out cards, newsletters or simply e-mails.
- Keep your website up to date using sites such (My Emma (www.myemma.com)); or Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com) -- businesses which let you use their services to send out your info. They do the work for you. They let you know if your guest's e-mail has bounced back.
- Call those Chambers, hospitals, churches and other community organizations again and again to see what's new. Spot a new business in town? Go in, introduce yourself and let them know what you offer.

Utilize online social networking. Don't know how? Have a younger person – a family member, high school or college student -- do it for you! -- Look at Travelocity, Groupon (beware the pitfalls, though), and WagJag, which can catch people's attention.

Identify your passions - It will give you a leg up on marketing something special.

Offer discounts - E.g. for repeat business, locals who book in their relatives, non-peak times.

Maintain friendly relations - Answer every single phone call with a smile in your voice!

Always be ready - Keep your reservation calendar with you all the time and take reservations on the spot.

Celebrate memories - Take photos of your guest with your sign. Think of what you could do with this, using electronic media!