



Fáilte Ireland

National Tourism Development Authority

# ENHANCING RECREATIONAL TRAILS THROUGH FOOD AND DRINK

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE GUIDELINES FOR  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOOD TRAILS

APRIL 2021



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# Introduction

The following document is a supplementary resource to the Guidelines for the Development of Food Trails.

The main goal of this supplement is to provide both practical and actionable insights for businesses and agency partners interested in animating and/or enhancing recreational trails (i.e. Greenways and Blueways) through food and drink.

A total of five case studies that take different and comprehensive approaches to connecting food and drink assets to recreational trails are presented. The case studies provide you with examples of how recreational trails are being animated and elevated through food and drink experiences by international tourism partners and individual businesses. You can draw learnings from them on where to look for opportunities in your region of Ireland, what types of landscapes and outdoor settings you could consider, and international examples of experiences that have been implemented around diverse outdoor destinations.



1

### **THE GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE, USA**

A 240km greenway in the eastern States of Maryland and Pennsylvania known for its Trail Town Certified Network which connects bikers and hikers to towns and businesses along the trail.

2

### **CABOT TRAIL/CAPE BRETON HIGHLANDS NATIONAL PARK, CANADA**

A 106km of the scenic Cabot Trail run along the coast in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Visitor experiences on the trail, outdoors, and connected to the sea are elevated through food and drink experiences such as the Perfect Picnic programme offered by Parks Canada and businesses in the region.

3

### **MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS, NEW ZEALAND**

A range of blueways and greenways along 1500km of coastline in the northern tip of the South Island. A growing international destination with a range of on-water and on-land food and drink experiences.

4

### **FLIMS LAAX FALERA TRAIL, SWITZERLAND**

A winter and summer destination most famous for its ski resorts and dramatic landscapes. Visitors are invited to explore food and drink businesses across the seasons through four pre-planned hiking and biking Culinary Trails.

5

### **MOUNTAIN ROAD, CANADA**

A ten day 121km biking itinerary in Charlevoix, a region famous for its producers, agritourism, landscapes, and food products. The biking trail is connected to several on-water and food and drink experiences and complemented by the region's Flavour Trail.

1

# The Great Allegheny Passage, USA

240KM HIKING  
AND BIKING GREENWAY

- TERRAIN  
Gravel, paved paths,  
and forest trails
- MAIN ACTIVITIES  
Hiking, biking,  
cross-country skiing
- SEASONS  
Summer and autumn







Photo Credit: Jen Dawson, Great Allegheny Passage

## Overview

The Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) is a greenway that runs from Cumberland, Maryland to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the eastern United States. The regional trail was developed on abandoned railway tracks. The GAP itself was only completed in 2013 after 35 years of trail development projects in the area. The main season for trail use is from mid-April to mid-November; however, winter activities such as cross-country skiing and hiking are possible on sections of the trail outside of the main season.

The GAP is one of 11 National Scenic Trails, the fourth longest rail trail in the United States, and a section of the trail is part of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail — one of eight nationally designated scenic trails in the United States. On TripAdvisor the GAP has an overall rating of 5 stars, listed as the #1 of 29 things to do in

Cumberland), and a total of 206 “Excellent” from 235 ratings.

## 5 stars on TripAdvisor and #1 thing to do in Cumberland

Currently, the GAP is owned by a mix of public and non-profit entities (including State parks, DMOs, municipalities, etc.) that form the Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy. Key organisations involved in the development and upkeep of the GAP include:

- The **Trail Town Certified Network Program** manages the network of 12 towns in the GAP Trail Town Network.
- The **Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy** promotes the GAP, and coordinates, strengthens, and supports the efforts of allied partners to ensure a high-quality experience for all those enjoying the trail.
- The **Rails to Trails Conservancy** is the national organisation advocating and supporting the rail-trail movement and communicating stories of the impact that trails have on communities.

The GAP is the first example of a Trail Town Certified Network<sup>1</sup> managed by the Trail Town Program. It is a free association for all businesses and organisations that are part of one of the certified Trail Towns. A Trail Town is a “destination along a long-distance trail. Whether on a rail trail, towpath, water trail, or hiking trail—trail users can venture off the trail to enjoy the scenery, services, and heritage of the nearby community with its own character and charm.”<sup>2</sup> In order to become a certified Trail Town, a town needs to have a “bicycle and pedestrian friendly philosophy” and a range of food and drink and lodging options to meet the needs of bikers on the trail.<sup>3</sup>

## Food & Drink Assets and Experiences

Restaurants, cafes, bakeries, coffee shops, grocers, breweries, wineries, and ice cream parlours are found in the Trail Towns. Since a visitor can find a Trail Town, directly on the trail or a little off the main trail, every 4 to 25 miles (approximately 6 to 40km), they can travel knowing that they will have access to food and drink, lodging, and basic amenities such as toilet facilities



across a network of towns from start to finish. This is an important assurance for visitors and has the added benefit of strengthening the regional trail network of businesses.

## Visitors travel knowing they have access to food and drink, lodging, and basic amenities

All the 12 Trail Towns are listed both on the GAP and Trail Town Program websites. The listings include the name, type, and location of the permanent businesses at each town.<sup>4</sup> Since the Trail Town listings focus on permanent businesses, visitors are also linked to the local tourism websites where they can learn about seasonal businesses and events. Each Trail Town provides a reference sheet for businesses that include tips for businesses interested in seizing the opportunities provided by the Trail Town listing. Under the “food and drink” category an example of an opportunity is:

*Trail users would likely frequent an informal café, and preferably with outdoor seating. Fresh and healthy menu items that include vegetarian options, packed lunches for trail-side consumption, and locally grown and raised food items would be of particular interest.<sup>5</sup>*

The main way that food and drink assets are incorporated into the visitor experience across the GAP is through the permanent businesses in the Trail Towns. A number of businesses offer guided biking tours on the GAP and these tours leverage the Trail Town Network for food stops, accommodation, and attractions. Some of these guided experiences also offer glamping where visitors camp and have “delicious, fresh food” cooked for them by the guides along their multi-day bike ride at camping sites along the trail.

## Connectivity

Connecting visitors to the Trail Towns and their businesses is the main aim of the Trail Town Program. For visitors planning a trip, information about food and drink assets is primarily accessed through the “Plan a visit” page on the GAP main site. The page includes a “Food & Drink” tab that lists all of the food and drink assets (restaurants, breweries, bed & breakfasts, etc.). A visitor planning their trip can also search for food and drink assets at a specific Trail Town. Additionally, visitors can learn about the food and drink assets on





the GAP through the official Trail Guide, online maps, e-newsletter, and brochures. Additional information about the GAP is available on several travel blogs, trip planning articles, TripAdvisor, and Wilderness Voyager.

Many bicycle rental companies along the trail offer shuttle services for riders and their bikes. Additionally, Amtrack (train) services stop at three Trail Towns. These services facilitate access to businesses on the trail by allowing visitors to venture onto the trail, explore the scenery, visit one or multiple Trail Towns, and plan to catch a ride back, on a shuttle or a train, to their starting point.

## Commercialisation

Although the overall trail experience is not commercialised, the creation and sale of the official Trail Guide for \$10 USD generates funds for the trail. The guide includes mile-by-mile trail descriptions, town maps and directories, and itineraries for day trips, weekends, and thru-rides, as well as a weather-proof map, plan-your-trip-checklist, parking and trail access points.

## Development and Supports

The organisation Rails to Trails conducts research into the outcomes and impacts of the Trail Town Network. Their research on the GAP identified that since its creation “visitors to the GAP have increased tenfold, a total of 65 new businesses and 270 new jobs have been created. The overall economic impact of the GAP now reaches a remarkable \$50 million each year.”<sup>6</sup>

### Visitors have increased tenfold and 65 new businesses and 270 new jobs have been created

The Trail Town Program provides resources for businesses looking to capitalise on opportunities presented by their Trail Town or enhance their offer. One example, is the GAP Digital Media Kit which provides analytics on content reach the main visitor markets, with 97% of their website visitors coming from the surrounding region,

as well as details on page views, referrals, and outbound clicks.<sup>7</sup> Although none of the resources are food and drink specific, many do include callouts to the type of food and drink experiences visitors are looking for.

These resources include:

- **Trail Towns Guide for Communities** designed to help leaders in Trail Towns take advantage of the economic opportunities available through tourism development and the Trail Town Network.
- **Print media and Digital media kits** for trail businesses with information on how they can leverage the Trail Town brand and GAP marketing channels to promote their business.<sup>8</sup>
- **Progress Fund**, non-profit organisation that can help fund Trail Town development for towns and businesses.<sup>9</sup>
- **Trail Town Business Opportunity Sheets** are town-specific resources. This reference sheet lists and explains the number and types of businesses in each Trail Town and where there is room for growth along the categories of “lodging, recreational, food and drink, retail, other amenities.”<sup>10</sup> For example, the Town of Homestead’s Business Opportunities include, “There is need for a coffee shop and a candy shop.”<sup>11</sup>





2

## Cabot Trail - Cape Breton Highlands National Park, Canada

100KM OF SCENIC TRAIL  
WITHIN A NATIONAL PARK

- TERRAIN  
Highlands plateau with paved  
seaside roads, beaches, and  
mountain trails
- MAIN ACTIVITIES  
Kayaking, boating, hiking,  
biking, wildlife watching
- SEASONS  
Summer and autumn



Photo Credit: Destination Canada, Cabot Trail

## Overview

The Cape Breton Highlands National Park in Nova Scotia, Canada is also home to approximately 100km of the Cabot Trail, a third of the 300km scenic road. Cape Breton Highlands is also known for the many outdoor and on-water activities such as hiking, kayaking, and wildlife watching.

Cape Breton Island was named “Best Island in the Americas” in 2019 by Condé Nast Readers’ Choice Awards. The Cabot Trail received the 2020 TripAdvisor Traveller’s Choice Award and was named one of the world’s most breathtaking drives and one of the world’s top 10 cycling destinations according to Lonely Planet.

### Recipient of the 2020 TripAdvisor Traveller’s Choice Award



The Cabot Trail runs primarily along the winding coastline, connecting with pristine beaches, designated picnic spots, and several towns and businesses.

Important tourism agency partners in the development of the Cabot Trail and Cape Breton Highlands National Park are Parks Canada, a government agency of the Federal Government, as well as Cape Breton Island Tourism, the regional Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO). The National Park offers both summer and winter access, however the main tourism season happens during the summer months.

## Food & Drink Assets and Experiences

Cape Breton Island boasts several food themed festivals, agritourism businesses, culinary packages, distilleries and distillery tours, fishing, farmers' markets, the list goes on. This diversity of offers is reflected in the visitor experiences along the Cabot Trail and the National Park. Due to the location of the destination, seafood is the focus of the local food experiences highlighted for visitors. This is complemented by a range of cafés, breweries, and restaurants near the Park.

**"... [enjoy] the warm welcome from the fishing communities you'll pass along the way, where you can stop to take in a ceilidh or a yummy dinner of fresh local seafood."<sup>12</sup>**

There are two main ways in which Parks Canada combines food and outdoor activities to create food and drink experiences for visitors to the Park. The first is the Perfect Picnic programme and the second is the Learn to Lobster Boil Experience.



Photo Credit: Destination Canada

The **Perfect Picnic programme** was piloted back in 2015. In partnership with local businesses, it facilitates visitor access to, and purchase of food. Three local businesses prepare and sell “perfect picnics” that visitors can purchase and pick up directly from the business before they take their picnics to one of trails or beaches that are included in 10 recommended picnic spots. Because the Park is a protected area, carry in and carry out approach is asked of visitors to preserve the natural environment and reduce waste.

The **Learn to Lobster Boil Experience** allows visitors to book an experience to “enjoy freshly cooked lobster on a rocky beach as the sun sets gently over the Gulf of St. Lawrence.” The experience has a maximum capacity of 15 people and can be booked on-site at the park. As part of the lobster boil, visitors learn about the history of lobster fishing, the process of lobster trapping, and their role in the ecosystem from a Parks Canada guide. They also participate in the cooking process, which ends in a meal of lobster rolls made with their lobster and freshly baked rolls from a local bakery. The experience takes place outdoors at the beach on picnic tables in most weather conditions, as long as there are participants who wish to attend.



In addition to the programmes that connect visitors to food and drink while at the park, a number of food and drink experiences connected to the area but not directly in the Park are also marketed by the DMO and Parks Canada.

These include the:

- **The Rum Tasting Experience** at the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site where visitors sample an authentic rum punch recipe. Along with the tasting, visitors also learn about sugar cane production and the role it played in trade, shipping, and slavery in colonial North America.
- **Lighthouse Bites Full Moon Adventure** is a sunset kayak and outdoor food experience under the stars. The North River Kayak company takes visitors to Kidston Island on the Bras d'Or lake, part of the UNESCO biosphere reserve, where they get to learn about the area, listen to live music, and enjoy gourmet local flavours under the full moon.

## Connectivity

To connect visitors to food and drink across outdoor areas, the Park has a total of five designated picnic areas, one of which is completely wheelchair accessible. These designated picnic areas all offer parking, toilet facilities, and for the most part wheelchair accessible picnic tables.

One of the areas also boasts a kitchen shelter where visitors can grill and prepare food under a roofed structure. Both the Perfect Picnic programme and the Learn to Lobster Boil experience draw from the infrastructure at the Park and aim to connect the visitor experience along the Cabot Trail and at Cape Breton Highlands National Park to the businesses, communities, and landscapes of the area through outdoor dining. The Perfect Picnic's brochure description makes this connection evident:

*Everything tastes better when you eat it outside! So go ahead—let nature design your dining space. The highlands, beaches, lakes, waterfalls and forests set the scene—add yourself and bon appétit!*

Since the Perfect Picnic programme encourages outdoor dining, it is a prime example of an initiative working to connect and facilitate visitor enjoyment of outdoor dining experiences along short trails that lead to scenic viewpoints for the perfect picnic spots next to waterfalls, the seaside, or on mountaintops. Waste is discouraged through a carry in and carry out policy at the park.

### Cape Breton Tourism publishes seasonal guides for culinary explorers.

To facilitate access to information about the range of foods and food experiences across the seasons, Cape Breton Tourism publishes seasonal guides for culinary explorers. These list local restaurants, food experiences, and must-try dishes based on the time of year.<sup>13</sup> The guide calls out specific businesses and experiences on the Cabot Trail and the Cape Breton Highlands National Park.

## Commercialisation

Both food and drink experiences offered by Parks Canada are examples of enhanced visitor experiences and commercial opportunities at beaches, lookout spots with parking lots, historic sites, and waterfalls, etc. by partnering with local businesses, connecting visitors to local food, and highlighting natural and outdoor areas through dining experiences.

The Perfect Picnic programme acts as a pop up food experience that visitors can purchase and take with them on their hike or day at the beach. It is a way to encourage visitors to go to the nearby communities, visit the business, purchase their products, and then venture into the park to explore and enjoy their picnic. Each picnic meal ranges from \$13-20 CAD, with additional costs for specific products such as lobster or optional items such as a branded blanket (\$20) and a picnic basket (\$30).

Comparatively, the Learn to Lobster Boil experience is also offered seasonally, and the price for the experience varies based on the market price of lobster.

## Development and Supports

Developments to better connect food & drink from the region to a range of tourism and outdoor experiences include the development of a regional food hub in 2015 and ongoing infrastructure construction and improvement.

The Pan Cape Breton Food Hub works with partners across the food production and distribution chains to make access to local products more accessible for a range of food and drink businesses—94.4% of the producers that provide their products through the Food Hub report that their sales have increased due to their participation; among these 50% report an increase of 25% or higher.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of infrastructure, the ongoing “Tourism Revitalization of Icons Program” launched in 2019 is providing funding for a project for the Municipality of the County of Inverness and for the County of Victoria to develop needed public

toile facilities access on the Cabot Trail to improve the visitor experience. This demonstrates the importance of continuous development to meet and address visitor needs, even if very basic ones.

Although the Cabot Trail is a highly ranked tourism product on the international stage, infrastructure gaps along its visitor journey are continually being addressed to meet visitor needs and expectations.

**Addressing infrastructure gaps is important to meet visitor needs and expectations**





3

# Malborough Sounds, New Zealand

1500KM OF COASTLINE

**TERRAIN**

— Waterways, mountain paths,  
and seaside trails

**MAIN ACTIVITIES**

— Kayaking, boating, hiking,  
and biking

**SEASONS**

— Year-round





Photo Credit: Destination Marlborough Sounds

## Overview

The region of Marlborough Sounds, on the north tip of the South Island in New Zealand, is known for its jaw dropping scenery, small towns, mouth-watering food and drink experiences, and range of on-land and on-water activities. The region is a collection of four Sounds, sea drowned valleys created when ocean levels rose 10,000 years ago, that accounts for 20% of New Zealand's coastline and 75% of its wine exports. The Queen Charlotte, Kenepuru, Pelorus, and Mahau sounds make up the Marlborough Sounds.

**Marlborough Sounds accounts for 20% of New Zealand's coastline and 75% of its wine exports**

Destination Marlborough Sounds promotes many trails for hiking and biking such as the multi-day Queen Charlotte Track, as well as several

waterways such as the Pelorus river. The range of lodges and resorts across the Sounds, some in secluded areas only accessible by boat, provide refined accommodation and dining experiences for those exploring the region.

Only Marlborough boasts a fifth of New Zealand's coastline, New Zealand's largest wine region, and its largest high-country farm. This makes for a fantastic holiday filled with great food, wine and craft beer, and unforgettable experiences in the mountains, among the vineyards or by the sea.<sup>15</sup>

## Food & Drink Assets and Experiences

Today visitors to Marlborough Sounds can experience visits to Greenshell mussel farms, wineries, lamb farms, farmers' markets, lodges, and restaurants by road and by boat.

An important food and drink asset in the Sounds is the Feast Marlborough event series in the autumn. The event grew out of the half marathon organised

by the Saint Clair Vineyard to become a multi-week celebration of local food and drink. Taste of Marlborough, which is part of the series, sees local restaurants and cafés creating event-specific dishes to win the title for the year.<sup>16</sup>

It is the on-boat experiences that stand out for best connecting the food and drink assets and facilitating one-day or multi-day visits throughout the year:

- Short trips to areas around the Sounds are serviced by **water taxis** from the town Picton. They bring visitors to secluded lodges in the morning, where visitors can explore the area and the lodge restaurants and pick them up again in the afternoon. This way day visitors can eat and explore the area without having to stay overnight. Of course, overnight stays are possible too.
- The **Pelorus Mail Boat Ltd** is a partly publicly funded transportation service that acts as both the mail delivery service to residents and businesses around the Sounds and a tour service for visitors, stopping at salmon farms, mussel farms, and restaurant for lunch during the summer.
- Several **private companies offer culinary cruises** which take visitors from Picton or Havelock around



the Sounds. The tours offer on-boat dining, wine tastings, as well as visits to production places such as salmon or mussel farms. Five separate companies offer on-boat culinary tours of the Sounds. These on-water food and drink experiences are marketed as one-day activities or bundles. Notably, the culinary cruises are bookable both through the private company and on the main DMO website. This ease of access to booking your experience where the visitor may be encountering the information as they plan is a definite good practice.

- More “hands-on” outdoor activities such as **sea-kayaking** also leverage the waterways of the Sounds and connect visitors to food and drink from the region. Companies such as Sea Kayaking Adventure organise private multi-day excursions in which visitors stay at the region’s lodges and have food catered using products from the region.

## Connectivity

Destination Marlborough Sounds offers a directory and visitor guide which includes “must do experiences” that blend outdoor activities with food and drink.

For example, taking a cruise or kayak to see where seafood grows is listed as the first “must do” experience.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the website includes many guides for types of activities such as “On the Water” or “Biking.” Each of these guides includes a “Search & Book” section and a visitor itinerary planner facility to mark the businesses offering services related to the guide. Importantly, booking of food and drink experiences is possible directly on the DMO website.

## Commercialisation

The Pelorus Mail Boat is a prime example of how an existing non-tourism service has been commercialised as a tourism experience. The boat delivers mail to residents and businesses around the Sounds, but it also provides on-water tours for visitors following its route. The boat is fully accessible for wheelchairs and strollers, and tickets are \$130 dollars per person.<sup>18</sup> As part of the 5-to-7-hour experience, the boat also stops at salmon and mussel farms, and on some days of the week it stops at an off-the-grid working sheep farm. In the summer season the boat stops for lunch at the isolated restaurant The Lodge at Te Rawa. Evolving the mailboat to be a tourism connector and



experience for visitors, allows visitors to see parts of the Sounds that are not accessible any other way, while tourist dollars help fund the service.

## Development and Supports

An important agency partner contributing to the growth of food and drink assets and experiences in the region is The Feast Marlborough Charitable Trust. The organisation has grown from primarily organising the Feast Marlborough event series during the autumn to a key agency in supporting the development and sharing the stories connected to food and drink experiences in Marlborough Sounds.

Importantly, wine, farming, and tourism industries are recognised as drivers of economic development and business opportunity for the region on the destination's "Business Opportunities" page. These industries are projected to have a healthy economic growth of 2% over the 2020/2021 period and development is encouraged at the destination level.<sup>19</sup> Marlborough Sounds success with food and drink experiences is largely due to the variety of products, producers, and experiences available, as well as the strong connections between tourism partners and food and drink assets and outdoor activities.

Photo Credit: Destination Marlborough Sounds

4

## Flims Laax Falera, Switzerland

250KM OF TRAILS CONNECTING  
MUNICIPALITIES OF FLIMS, LAAX,  
AND FALERA

- TERRAIN  
Gravel and mountain paths
- MAIN ACTIVITIES  
Hiking, biking, swimming,  
snow trekking
- SEASONS  
Summer and Winter







Photo Credit: Culinary Tourism Alliance

## Overview

The region of Flims Laax and Falera is known for its mountain resorts, hiking, and skiing and snowboarding in the winter spread across its Alpine valleys. Aside from the world-renowned ski resorts, visitors to the region can also visit the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site Tectonic Arena Sardona, the Rhine Gorge known as “Swiss Grand Canyon” and Lake Cauma. The destination is also home to a trail route network of 250km and home to Switzerland’s oldest hiking trail, the Pinut Climbing Route.

### Culinary trails through mountains, forest, lakes, valleys, and gorges

Food & drink assets and experiences are connected throughout the region’s on-land marked trail paths (gravel and terrain) along mountains, forest, lakes, valleys, and gorges through the

culinary trails created by the destination management company and affiliated food providers.

The destination is managed and marketed by Flims Laax Falera Management, part of the Weisse Arena Gruppe, an integrated service company in the tourism and leisure industry in the canton of Graubünden in Switzerland.<sup>20</sup> The destination has been awarded Switzerland's "Families Welcome" quality seal, signalling its focus on meeting the needs of families.<sup>21</sup>

## Food & Drink Assets and Experiences

Aside from its outdoor and multi-seasonal activities, Flims Laax Falera Management actively promotes and connects the restaurants, cafés, bars, guest houses, and bistros as rest stops to the outdoor attractions and activities available. It achieves this through three culinary trails that lead visitors through the network of trails, whether on the mountain, or through valleys, on-foot, or on-bike, with designated stops and tastings at restaurants and cafés across the

region. The culinary trails, which vary based on the season, include two hiking trails in the summer and one in the winter:

- **Culinary Trail Mountain and View:** Bookable from June to October the trail duration is approximately 8 hours including tastings at five businesses. The trail follows a panoramic mountain trail and visitors also have the option of taking the chairlift down to Flims at the end.<sup>22</sup>
- **Culinary Trail Forest & Water:** Offered from May to October the trail takes approximately 6-7 hours to complete, including tastings at three businesses. It takes visitors from Flims Waldhaus to the Rhine Gorge and to Lake Cresta with a pre-planned 3-course menu.<sup>23</sup>
- **Culinary Trail Forest & Winter:** Available from December to April, the winter trail is the shortest taking approximately 2.5 hours of hiking time with plenty of rest-time at the tasting-stops. The trail takes visitors snow-covered landscapes, town centres, and a total of three businesses.<sup>24</sup>

Each culinary trail has its own map, determined stops, and tasting opportunities. Each culinary trail is structured as a hike so that visitors are to hike from one food stop to another (three in total) over the course of their day.





While the summer trails have a set itinerary with recommended times of visit, the winter trail is more informal and only has one rest-stop. Visitors booking a culinary trail experience are asked to call the businesses ahead to make reservations for the time and date of their choice.

## Connectivity

Visitors are connected to food & drink assets and experiences across the destination through a variety of ways, all primarily at permanent businesses. The three culinary trails are one way that connections are achieved.

Each trail has its own subpage with descriptions, maps, menus, business contact information, safety information on trail use, and videos to inform and inspire the visitors.

Information on food & drink as tourism experiences is available across the Flims Laax Falera Management website through the "Food & Entertainment" section, including listing businesses that currently offer take away and delivery options as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Neatly enough, the landscape is connected directly to the



types of food & drink assets such as “Mountain Restaurants” and “Valley Restaurants.”<sup>25</sup>

Information about the culinary trails in Flims Laax and Falera can also be found on outdoor and trail planning platforms that include Outdooractive, TripAdvisor, and Appentura.

## Commercialisation

The key learning from the culinary trails of Flims Laax Falera is that recreational trails can provide added value and a commercial opportunity by packaging food and drink businesses and products as a full day experience for visitors.

### **Recreational trails can be packaged with food & drink and sold as full day visitor experiences**

The culinary trails package businesses, tastings at each food stop, and connect them all through the recreational trails across the destination. This encourages people to get outdoors, explore the

trails, and taste local products at leisure during both the summer and winter seasons.

By doing this the destination management organisation can diversify and enhance the tourism offer from just skiing/snowboarding in winter and hiking in summer to experience-based trails that benefit businesses across the region.

## Development and Supports

A critical factor to the development and success of the culinary trails is the distances and the quality of the trails between restaurants and villages. If your recreational trails connect various communities or businesses, taking the approach of structuring a visitor’s journey through suggested rest stops and tastings is a viable and relatively easy way to start connecting food & drink assets and experiences to your recreational trail. Importantly, the culinary trails are not static tourism products, recently a new E-bike Culinary Trail and the Culinary Trail Forest & Winter were developed.<sup>26</sup>

5

## Mountain Road, Canada

121KM OF ROAD CONNECTED  
TO RECREATIONAL TRAILS

- TERRAIN  
Paved road paths, hiking paths,  
and waterways
- MAIN ACTIVITIES  
Hiking, biking, kayaking,  
agritourism
- SEASONS  
Summer and autumn





Photo Credit: Destination Canada

## Overview

The Mountain Road in the Charlevoix region of Québec, Canada is a scenic biking and car route that gets its name from the mountainous terrain it passes.

The route passes the villages of Saint-Urbain, Saint-Hilarion, Notre-Dame-des-Monts and Saint-Aimé-des-Lacs, as well as the National Parks Grands-Jardins and Hautes-Gorges-de-la-Rivière-Malbaie. Its focus is the outdoor activities, such as hiking, kayaking, and boating available throughout the recreational trails connected to the route.

A secondary focus is the food & drink assets and experiences that visitors have access to across the region and through the Charlevoix Flavour Trail. The trail is presented as a 10-day itinerary by Bonjour



Québec, the provincial DMO, and supported by the municipalities and Tourisme Charlevoix, the regional DMO. Although both summer and winter activities are available throughout the trail, the Mountain Road is primarily a summer and autumn destination.

### Rated #6 activity at La Malbai, Charlevoix on TripAdvisor

The Mountain Road is listed as the #6 activity at La Malbai, Charlevoix with visitor reviews and ratings on TripAdvisor.

## Food & Drink Assets and Experiences

Charlevoix is a year-round destination with a reputation as region for quality food & drink assets and experiences. The destination boasts a number of food producers, growers, restaurants and cafés, and agritourism experiences. As part of the Mountain Road, several farms are featured as stops on the 10-day itinerary. These include:

- **The Centre de l'Émeu de Charlevoix (Emu Centre):** An emu farm, recently designated as an economuseum, where visitors can see and learn about emu oil processing, take a tour of the farm, purchase products in the boutique, and enjoy dishes made with emu in their restaurant.<sup>27</sup>
- **The Ferme Basque de Charlevoix (Basque Farm):** Close to the town of Saint Urbain, this small-scale duck farm produces products such as foie gras and other meat products. Visitors can come to the farm to taste the products, take a self-guided tour, see the animals, and purchase from their year-round shop.<sup>28</sup>



- **Salmon fishing on the Gouffre river:** Visitors can rent equipment or join a class offered by the Association de conservation de la Vallée du Gouffre (Conservation Association for the Gouffre Valley).
- **Ferme Caprivoix Farm:** Visitors can go to the farm and have access to the grounds for a fee of \$5 dollars. There they can see the herd of highland cows and goats, there is also a petting zoo for children and a farm shop where visitors can purchase their and regional products.<sup>29</sup>

By taking an itinerary approach, Bonjour Québec has structured a bike trip itinerary that combines the outdoors and food & drink assets and experiences through itinerary stops such as hiking on specific trails, kayaking on the Saint Lawrence river, visiting farms, and fishing. Since the itinerary is provided as a trip-planning resource for visitors, rather than a bookable package, visitors are asked to plan their visit to each business ahead of time. This includes confirming business hours and clarifying what rules may be in place at each business (including liability considerations).



## Connectivity

Visitors to the Mountain Road are connected to food & drink assets and experiences through the businesses listed as stops on the trail. Additionally, the Tourisme Charlevoix website features two restaurants and four food producers that are reachable while on the trail.<sup>30</sup>

Infrastructure along the recreational trails includes picnic spots and rest stops such as three log cabins at the base of the Traversée de Charlevoix trail where visitors can rest after their trail hike and enjoy products that they've purchased at the businesses. The connection between the Mountain Road and food and drink businesses across the region is highlighted by visitors through their reviews on TripAdvisor:

*Stop in some of the villages to meet the people. We met artists, antique dealers, cheese makers. Each was friendly and eager to talk about their lovely country.<sup>31</sup>*

Through the food & drink assets and experiences included on the Mountain Road, visitors are also exposed to the region's Flavour Trail.

The Flavour Trail was established in 1996 and continues to function as a self-guided tour throughout the food & drink assets, towns, and trails of Charlevoix. The trail is provided as a magazine and online map with information on "producers", "restaurateurs" and "affiliate members" (activity-based tourism businesses and lodgings). The Trail is a complementary tourism product, with many of the food stops on the Mountain Road also being stops on the Flavour Trail. For recreational trails, there is the opportunity to connect existing food & drink assets such as a food trail to new routes or itineraries developed.



## Commercialisation

The Mountain Road itinerary is offered as a free trip planning resource for visitors, so the trail is not commercialised. Instead, individual businesses and specific outdoor attractions set their own fees for participation. For example, day access to Grand-Jardins National Park is \$8.90 dollars and access to the Ferme Caprivoix farm is \$5 dollars per person. Through this approach, the Mountain Road acts more as a connector to experiences throughout the region rather than a purchasable tourism product.

## Development and Supports

Although the Mountain Road is presented as a biking or road trip itinerary in Charlevoix, recent projects connected directly to the route seek to improve the infrastructure along the Mountain Road to make the visitor experience more seamless and better connected to the towns and their businesses.

In 2019 three municipalities on the trail Saint-Urbain, Saint-Aimé-des-Lacs and Notre-Dame-des-Monts partnered with Tourisme Charlevoix to improve the route and encourage stops at the communities.

Each of the three communities is working to build two rest stops that carry the branding and colours of the Mountain Road. The project is funded by the partnership and awaiting approval of funding from the provincial government.

Additionally, the partners leading infrastructure development are also looking to improve the road signage for the Mountain Road in partnership with the Ministry of Transportation.<sup>32</sup> Through this development initiative visitors will be able to follow the Mountain Road with ease and identify the rest stops that act as jumping points to exploring the towns and their businesses.

**A trail rest stop is an important jumping point to exploring local towns and villages**



# Key Takeaways

Throughout the five case studies numerous actionable learnings and examples are presented to enhance the visitor experience on your recreational trail through connections to food & drink assets and experiences.

## Some key takeaways to keep in mind include:

- 1 Connecting your recreational trail to food & drink assets and experiences allows visitors to venture off the trail to discover businesses in the area or visit businesses to purchase food and drink to bring with them to enjoy along the scenic trail.
- 2 Food & drink assets and experiences can be connected to recreational trails through a variety of ways including trail signage, pre-planned itineraries, businesses that offer complementary



services with food and drink (e.g. culinary boat trips, catered bike tours), dedicated food trails, picnic programmes in partnership with local businesses, tourism experiences showcasing food and drink such as classes etc.

3

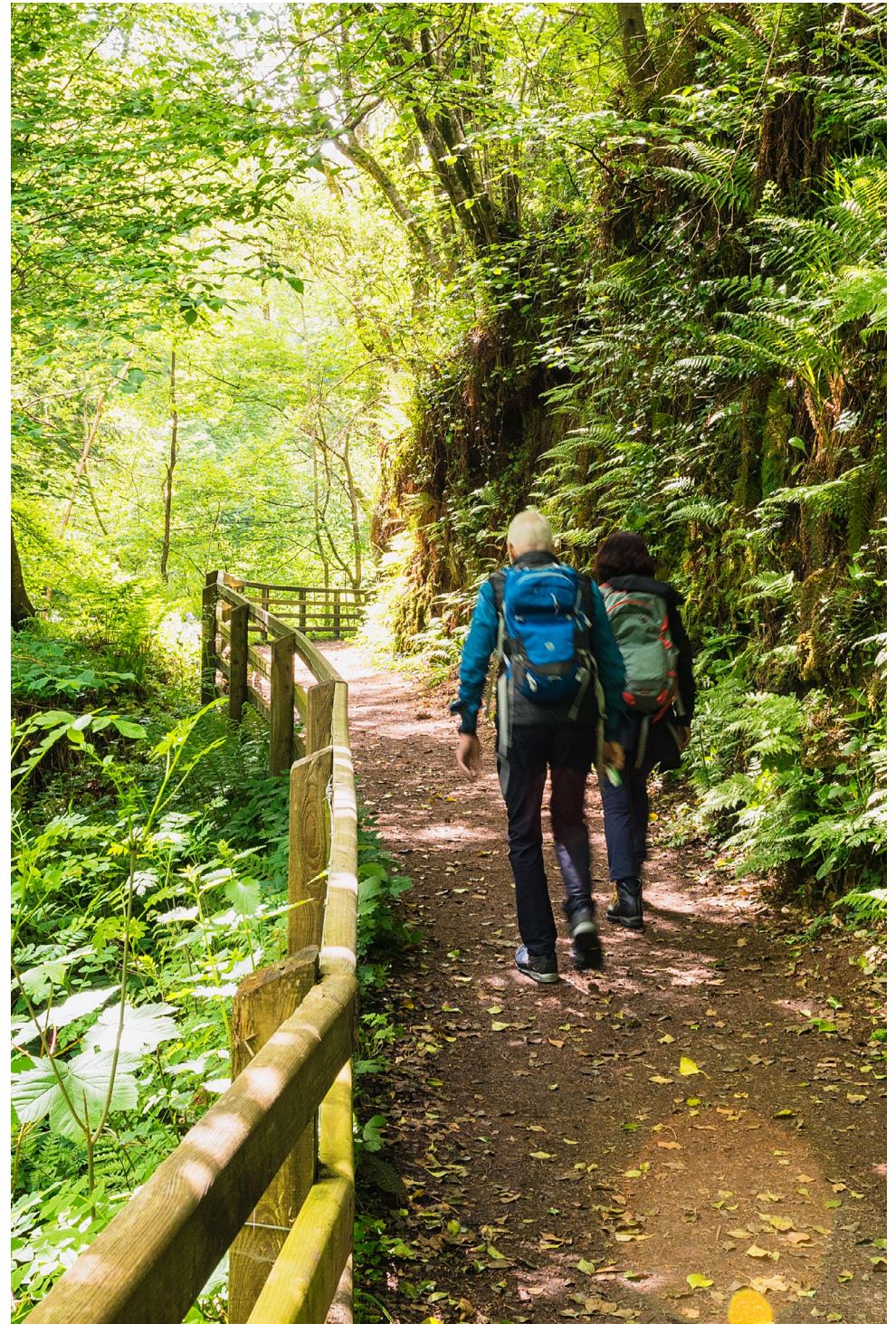
Taking stock of the range and number of food & drink assets and experiences near your recreational trail is an important step as the diversity of offers can directly enrich the diversity of experiences that animate your trail.

4

A Food & Drink tab or subpage on the trail website detailing the names, locations and trading periods of trail aligned and nearby food and drink businesses is a simple way of enhancing the visitor experience, and commercial revenue for local businesses.

5

Prime settings to animate with food & drink on your recreational trail include scenic lookouts, rest stops, picnic areas, beaches, and landmark or heritage sites along or near the trail.







6

Providing clear information to visitors on waste management and reduction is essential. A carry in carry out policy is one way in which several of the case studies encourage visitors to respect the natural environment. Better yet, think about how the food & drink experience can produce no waste at all!

7

Certain trail materials such as trail guides can be commercialised when they provide information and connections to food & drink assets and experiences that add value to visitor planning, through pre-planned itineraries, suggested routes and maps, or information on 'must-try' products and experiences.

8

Existing non-tourism services can be innovated and commercialised for tourism purposes such as a mail boat along waterways that delivers mail and brings visitors on a trip around exclusive parts of your destination. Including stops at food & drink places is a key way to enrich the visitor experience.

# Additional Resources

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOOD TRAILS,**

### **FÁILTE IRELAND**

A practical aid for use by individuals involved in the design, development, and management of local, regional, or national food trails.

## **FOOD TOURISM RESOURCES, FÁILTE IRELAND**

A range of research reports, webinars, and additional resources related to food tourism.

## **OUTDOOR DINING BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES,**

### **FÁILTE IRELAND**

Guidelines outlining best practices for design and execution of outdoor dining in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **LOCAL FOOD PROGRAMME AT THE NORWEGIAN**

### **TREKKING ASSOCIATION**

Lodges across Norway affiliated to the Norwegian Trekking Association serve local dishes using ingredients sourced locally. "DNT is proud to offer

culinary experiences rooted in traditions and history, while aiming for a sustainable future. Local mountain fare is food with a view."<sup>34</sup>

## **PERFECT PICNIC PROGRAM AT PARKS CANADA**

A program designed for visitors to visit local businesses, purchase their products packaged into the 'perfect picnic', and enjoy them while visiting a national park. "Because everything tastes better when you eat it outside! Enjoy Parks Canada's twist on take-out and let nature design your dining space with the Perfect Picnic..."<sup>35</sup>

## **EMPTY ESKIE PLEDGE**

A not-for-profit initiative developed in Australia to support business and community recovery following the wildfires disasters. "Commit to helping out our fellow neighbours and stimulating local fire-affected economies." Pledges and charters can play an important role in supporting business and community recovery.<sup>33</sup>

# Notes

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