



WHAT IS A FAMILIARIZATION TOUR?

A Familiarization (FAM) Tour involves hosting tour operators, travel agents and travel media in an effort to create awareness, in this case, of the travel experiences that are available along the Rideau Heritage Route.

The purpose of hosting a travel agent or tour operator FAM tour is to either increase product knowledge and/or destination knowledge. One of the key roles of the Rideau Heritage Route Tourism Association (RHRTA) is to sell the region as an exciting destination. In doing so, one of the most effective methods is to initiate and organize FAM tours. These FAM tours can only be successful with the participation and cooperation of local tourism operators.

When FAM tour participants experience the RHRTA first hand, they are able to better relay information to their readers and clients. Since their jobs involve dispersing information to large numbers of people, this is a valuable tool.

There are four types of FAM tours: Travel Agents, Tour Operators, Media and Industry

Travel Agents – A travel agent will most likely participate in a FAM tour to increase their product knowledge about a destination so they can better sell it to their clients. Travel agents have become extremely niche-focused, so it is important they are experts in the area in which they specialize. Travel agents also often work in tandem with tour operators in selling their tours. Tour operators will sometimes arrange FAM tours for their top-selling travel agents to make sure they are completely up to date on the product the tour operator is selling.

Tour Operators – If a tour operator features the RHRTA in their brochure, they will often arrange a FAM tour for their staff. This gives the operators the opportunity to experience the product first-hand so they can adequately sell it to their clients. On the other hand, the RHR may invite tour operators, who have not experienced the region, to tour the area in hopes that the destination will be added to a brochure.

Media – The purpose of hosting a media FAM tour is to garner positive editorial publicity about a destination and/or organization. This is different than paid advertising in the sense that the publicity generated through media relations efforts is the editorial opinion of the writer, which is often considered more valuable than paid advertising.

Individual - Many journalists prefer to conduct individual FAM tours, meaning that they want to experience a destination on their own as opposed to with a group of other writers. When journalists travel on their own, they typically have a particular story assignment or they are writing on “spec” and they have a specific story idea in mind. For example, if a writer has an assignment to cover new spas, the RHRTA would develop a suggested itinerary featuring new spa experiences.

Group – The RHRTA often plans group media tours in collaboration with other tourism organizations such as Ontario Tourism or Ottawa Tourism. These media groups will have detailed itineraries and will be escorted by a member of the RHRTA.

Industry – Frontline staff of associations, sector organizations and agencies like the Ontario Travel Centres, Ministry of Tourism and Culture or Paddle Canada.

IS A FAM TOUR RIGHT FOR YOU AND/OR YOUR BUSINESS?

Ask yourself:

1. Do I want tourists to visit my destination and are we able to accommodate the needs of individual tourists and group tours? This may seem like a silly question, but in reality, some destinations are not equipped to handle tour buses and large groups of people.
2. Are the partners in your destination willing to work with the RHR to provide complimentary or discounted services for FAM tours? For example, an accommodation property might need to offer a free room or a special rate for a journalist, but if they get mentioned in the article, the advertising equivalency value of the article will far exceed the value of the complimentary room, making it a great return on investment. They also have to keep in mind that if they are not specifically mentioned in the article, providing a complimentary hotel room is still good for the community as a whole because it is bringing positive publicity to the destination.

HOW TO GET STARTED

If you are interested in participating in FAM tours, please contact the Executive Director of the RHRTA at info@rideauheritageroute.ca. Your interest could include anything from offering a complimentary overnight stay to a gift of a locally-made product. The broader the inventory of experiences the RHR has to offer or “sell”, the more attractive it is to travel agents, tour operators and the media. Furthermore, if you have new tourism product or a new experience to offer, please contact the RHRTA so that they may assist you in creating awareness your experience.



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EXPECTATIONS OF TOURISM SUPPLIERS

There are times when the detailed schedule of an itinerary does not happen as planned. There are many reasons for that, for example; the FAM tour may be delayed or the group could make a last minute change. Flexibility, on behalf of the tourism supplier, is important. The RHRTA will do its best to alert the tourism supplier of any known changes. It is very common for a member of the media to travel on his or her own, without being escorted by the RHRTA. The RHRTA will recommend an appropriate itinerary, based on the contact's storyline, but it is not necessarily specifically followed. However, for example, when a tourism supplier offers a complimentary stay, he or she has the right to ask the media contact for a few minutes of their time in order to show the property.

Please note that if you get a call from someone claiming to be media and wanting a "free stay", do not hesitate to contact the RHRTA so that they can determine whether this person is legitimate. Be aware that there are people out there claiming to be media when they are not.

ITINERARY EXAMPLES

Some Travel Media and Tour Operators have very specific requests for activities and experiences so each itinerary is tailored to the FAM. Below you will see a few different examples of itineraries we have used in the past.

RIDEAU PADDLE & PEDAL ITINERARY

FOR: MARYANN LIN, CHIEF CORRESPONDENT, XINHUA NEWS AGENCY TORONTO BUREAU

Day One:

- 1:00 PM Anne Marie Forcier, Executive Director Rideau Heritage Route Tourism. Association will pick up Ms. Lin in Toronto and escort for the rest of the day.
- 4:00 PM Driving tour of Downtown Kingston before heading to Perth.
- 6:30 PM Dinner at Fiddleheads Restaurant, Perth - hosted by OTMPC.
Overnight at Code's Mill Inn in Perth.

Day Two:

- 8:30 AM Smiths Falls Chamber will pick you up Pedal & Paddle tour. (Lunch & dinner included)
Overnight at Colonel By Best Western at Smiths Falls
Manager Amit Patel 613-284-0001 and bwcolonelbyinn@gmail.com.

Day Three

- 8:00 AM Continental Buffet Breakfast
- 9:00 AM Transfer to train station
- 9:45 AM Take the 9:45 AM train from Smiths Falls to arrive in Toronto at 1:35 PM.



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SHITTOKO TV FAM

- 7:30 AM Depart Ottawa – Follow Colonel By Drive to River Road (turns into Rd 19). Continue on Rd 19 through Manotick then onto Kemptville. Follow Hwy 43 west to Merrickville. This is the official “Rideau Heritage Route” and there is signage all along the route.
- 8:30 AM Film at Merrickville
This village is renowned for its boutiques, which are filled with one-of-a-kind items made by local artisans. Merrickville has many beautiful heritage buildings.
- 9:30 AM Depart for Westport – Film the harbour and Foley Mountain (Spy Rock).
Foley Mountain offers a spectacular view of the village of Westport & the harbour from Spy Rock. Westport is a core for hiking and cycling enthusiasts with the 300 km Rideau Trail linking Kingston and Ottawa passing through.
- 10:30 AM Depart Foley Mountain for Perth / Lanark
- 11:30 AM Arrive Wheelers Pancake House - enjoy “The Canadian” Maple lunch
Film sugar camp and Maple museum. Contact Mark or Judy Wheeler at (613) 278-2788 www.wheelersmaple.com.
- 12:30 PM Depart Wheelers and travel to Chaffey’s Locks (back through Perth and Westport).
- 1:30 PM Arrive at Chaffey’s Lock Station.
- 1:45 PM Classic Rideau Cruise aboard “Chuckles” with Captain Lance
An environmentally-friendly electric engine will provide a silent ride in the comfort of a vintage cruiser. Marvel at the sights and sounds of nature, including the cry of the loons, in this most beautiful section of the Rideau. (Cruise time 14:00-15:30) Contact is Lance Jervis (613) 272-0222 www.rideauboattours.com
- 3:30 PM Boat Cruise arrives at Jones Falls -
Walking Tour of Jones Falls blacksmith shop, Whispering Wall – Stone Arch dam, (The stone dam at Jones Falls was the highest in the world in 1832 when it was completed!).
- 4:30 PM Depart Jones Falls for Kingston Mills.
- 5:30 PM Arrive Kingston Mills lock station.
- 6:00 PM Arrive in Kingston and overnight.



Elsa Camara, Jonview (Receptive Operator)

SELF DRIVE/unescorted tour

- Day One** Arrive in Kingston and explore downtown. Nestled at the confluence of the Rideau Canal and the St. Lawrence River where they meet Lake Ontario, Kingston is a city built on a grand heritage and defined by an exquisite ability to blend the beauty of yesterday with the passion and sophistication of today. Check into Frontenac Club Inn and enjoy a Haunted walk if you dare...
- Day Two** Tour Kingston in the morning – Visit the Kingston Farmers’ Market (operating since 1801).
- 9:00 AM Confederation Tour Trolley (50 minute guided tour).
- 10:00 AM Depart Kingston with stop at the Doner Studio at Lower Brewers Mills in an 1865 Grist Mill - Handcrafted metal sculptures and whimsical garden art.
- 11:00 AM Depart by van for Chaffey’s Lock Station. Arrive at Chaffey’s Lock for lunch at the Opinicon Resort
- 1:45 PM Join Captain Lance Jervis-Read aboard his 30 ft. cruiser “Chuckles” as he narrates the history of the Rideau Canal from Chaffey’s Lock to Jones Falls and return.
Contact is Lance Jervis-Read, Classic Rideau Cruises at (613) 272-0222.
- 6:30 PM Arrive in Perth, voted the prettiest town in Ontario. The town of Perth attracts thousands of tourists every year. With its inspiring architecture, the revitalized limestone buildings are the heartbeat of Perth’s heritage character. Site inspection and overnight at Code’s Mill Inn & Spa, standing majestically overlooking Stewart Park. Code’s Mill, directly across the street, has become a “must-see” destination for visitors. 82 Peter St. Perth, ON K7H 1S2 Tel: (613) 326-0082 www.codesmillinn.com
- Day Three** Depart Perth after breakfast at the Inn.
Arrive in Smiths Falls, located in the Heart of the Rideau Canal, where you will find a unique mix of leisure and recreational activities set against a backdrop of history and nature. While there, visit Trailhead’s canoe and kayak rental centre located in Victoria Park. Afterwards, visit the Rideau Canal Museum. Contact is Lisa Bell, Manager at (613) 284-0505. www.rideau-info.com/museum.
- 11:00 AM Depart for Merrickville, Canada's prettiest village renowned for its concentration of unique artisans from glass blowers to mustard makers!
Lunch in Merrickville.

EDITORIAL COVERAGE – “FREE INK”

Below is a listing of some past coverage that was a direct result of the Familiarization to the RHR.

- CBC Fresh Air Radio 1 – Weekend Getaways : Portland Skate the Lake and Rideau Lakes Cup
- Sydney Sun Herald – Australia: 1 page colour article in Feb 15, 2009 Edition. PR Value: \$86,000
Circ: 478,890
- Power Boating Canada – 8 page colour article by Bill Jennings (Aug 08 FAM). PR Value: \$128,000

Canada/US

- Vancouver Sun - Jeff Lukovich
- VIA Destinations magazine -Danielle Goyette
- Globe & Mail - Betty Zyvatkaukas

Australia/New Zealand

- Gurus Explore Canada TV show
- Australian Financial Review newspaper
- The Senior - Sue Preston
- Queensland Courier
- New Idea - a weekly national women’s magazine
- Herald Sun - Melbourne & Victoria

Japan

- Daytona Magazine
- Hanajikan Magazine Photographer & Travel editor
- World Traveler Northwest Airline in-flight magazine
- BRAVI Magazine
- AGORA Magazine Japan Airlines In-flight magazine
- National Geographic Japan

China

- Xinhua News Agency
- Perfect Family Contest -Shen Xue & Zhao Hongbo

South Korea

- Traveller Magazine Korean Airlines in-flight magazine
- Korean Broadcast News Rideau Houseboat Tour

UK /Germany/Austria

- London Daily Express -Andrew Eames
- Die Presse -Christian Schuhböck

Mexico

- National Geographic Traveller - Miriam Martinez
- Reforma Newspaper - Jimm Budd