

# Growth in International Tourism

A multi-fold opportunity for Vermont

# Credentials

- ▶ Peter MacLaren, co-owner of West Hill House B&B in Warren
- ▶ Recently selected by the Vermont Chamber as Innkeeper of the Year
- ▶ Chair of the Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Member of the Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee
- ▶ A founding member of VIBBA - Vermont Inns and Bed & Breakfast Association

# An Innkeepers perspective

- ▶ Accommodation selection is most often the key decision point for a guest's planning
  - ▶ Once here, guests then purchase in Vermont:
    - ▶ Transportation - rental cars etc.
    - ▶ Recreational activities
    - ▶ Dining experiences
    - ▶ Gifts to to take home, and more
- ▶ It is our job as a property to market and differentiate ourselves
- ▶ It is our Chamber of Commerce's job to market and differentiation our region
- ▶ However:
  - ▶ *We need our perspective guests to want to come to Vermont in the first place*
  - ▶ **This is where we need the Vermont Dept. of Tourism & Marketing!**

## Some facts

- ▶ The Vermont Dept. of Tourism and Marketing budget has not increased, even with inflation, for many years, a de facto decrease year-over-year
- ▶ Based on Rooms & Meals tax receipts there has been modest recent growth in tourism from US based travelers
- ▶ *However*, all indications are that despite ongoing significant growth in International travel globally, Vermont is not attracting these travelers
- ▶ **So let's discuss the opportunities for growing International tourism**

# International Travelers

- ▶ Roger Dow, The U.S. Travel Association's CEO, is quoted recently as saying:
  - ▶ The nation's share of international visitors has fallen
  - ▶ Some competing countries are boosting their international visitor numbers at a clip of 6 to 8 percent a year
- ▶ People are traveling - they are just not coming here!
- ▶ Yet in early 2018 Vermont dropped out of DNE\* - Discover New England - primarily due to budget cuts (*although there were other factors*).
- ▶ The primary international marketing focus is now just in the UK

*\*DNE is an organization representing all 6 (now just 5) New England States promoting the region globally to mainly European travel agencies and tour operators - one example of international marketing*

# Our innkeeping perspective

- ▶ International guests (excluding Canada & the UK) are around 2 to 3% of our business and relatively flat in recent years
- ▶ However our international guests:
  - ▶ Book sooner (including deposits!) and don't cancel
  - ▶ Stay longer & spend more locally and in the State
- ▶ When we ask our international guests about their travel planning:
  - ▶ Few actually know or hear much about Vermont in their home country
  - ▶ They hear about New York and outdoor recreation out West
  - ▶ They make their decision to come to Vermont primarily through:
    - ▶ Recommendations from friends
    - ▶ Recommendations from Travel Agents
- ▶ To grow this important segment of Vermont's tourism business we need help!

# Recommendations

- ▶ We need to give the Dept of Tourism and Marketing the resources to market and build the international tourism segment - a real opportunity for our State
- ▶ As apparent from the recent hard decisions that have been made, current budgets just do not provide this flexibility
- ▶ We urge support for increased funding for Tourism and Marketing in this year's Fiscal Year Budget
- ▶ And specifically support for H. 298, a dedicated fund for tourism marketing

Thank you