



A BRITISH COLUMBIA CASE STUDY

STEVESTON HISTORIC SITES

A Trial Run Improves Success for the Steveston Heritage Experience

This case study¹⁴ illustrates how:

- designing a multi-faceted experience with a variety of partners can increase opportunities for individual operators, as well as deepen the visitor's connection with the area.
- investing in a trial run of the experience with specialists, media, visitors, and locals can ensure delivery of a memorable experience, inform the experience design, and help jump-start a business's marketing efforts.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Trial runs of the experience are vital — Delivering a new experience to a select target audience can mitigate risk and allow for enhancements prior to going to market.
- Partnerships build strength — Partnerships allow us to focus on our strengths and set the foundation for long-term value and opportunities with other organizations.
- Work with your Community Destination Management Organization (CDMO) — Tourism Richmond was a key partner in allowing businesses to fully understand what the CDMO was seeking to develop an experience that responds to demand and can amplify its own marketing efforts.

A FOUR-COMPANY PARTNERSHIP



Three City of Richmond historic sites — Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site (NHS), Steveston Tram, Steveston Museum — as well as the Gulf of Georgia Cannery NHS

and the Steveston Historic Society, launched a new initiative to attract visitors to Steveston. Tourism Richmond (the CDMO) provided marketing support.

THE CHALLENGE

Steveston attracts 26 percent of leisure travellers who come to Richmond; most flock to the downtown area on the shores of the middle arm of the Fraser River. While the various historic sites and societies were open to visitors, there was no program that integrated the individual stories at each site to tell the full story of Steveston. Tourism Richmond believed that visitors would have a better experience if they could engage with the full story, rather than bits and pieces.

¹⁴This case study was made possible through the cooperation of the following persons: Ceri Chong, Director, Destination & Industry Development, Tourism Richmond, Julie-Anne Toda, Community Facilities Programmer, Britannia Shipyards NHS, City of Richmond, Sarah Shovlain, Museum & Heritage Programmer, Steveston Tram, City of Richmond and the research team of Jane Osler, PJ Osler & Associates, Nancy Arseneault and Lesley Anderson, Tourism Café Canada.



The City of Richmond’s historic sites were focused on serving the needs and interests of residents. Departmental changes within Museums & Heritage Services resulted in management at individual sites being tasked to enhance existing programming with a new focus on the visitor market. However, the staff at these sites had little understanding of tourism, how to develop experiences of interest to visitors, and lacked dedicated funding for visitor-focused programming.

THE SOLUTION

Tourism Richmond wanted to increase collaboration amongst local businesses and encourage the development of new heritage-based visitor experiences that would appeal to target markets. Hosting the Remarkable Experiences Program, a Destination BC training program for BC-based tourism businesses, Tourism Richmond brought together programming staff from the four historic attractions in Steveston.

A key element in developing a new tourism experience is in understanding the type of traveller to which it will appeal. Canada is fortunate to have award-winning research¹⁵ that assists tourism businesses and destination marketers to better understand the different types of travellers and their individual motivations for travelling to and within Canada. Tourism Richmond used this research to determine the core traveller types on which it would focus: Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers — travellers who want to learn about the history and culture of the places they visit.

Based on an understanding of these traveller types, the programming staff from the four historic sites believed they could partner to develop a stronger experience to tell the history of Steveston. The thought of launching a new experience within the year was somewhat unachievable, as none of the partners had budgeted for the project. Tourism Richmond’s Pacific. Authentic. Scholarship Program was exactly what the group needed to move their dreams to reality; the group vied for and won the scholarship.

¹⁵Explorer Quotient (EQ) is the name of the traveller segmentation framework developed by Destination Canada. Contact Destination BC at: TourismResearch@DestinationBC.ca to express an interest in becoming an EQ sub-licensee.

The resulting Steveston Heritage Experience targeted Tourism Richmond's core traveller types. The experience that was initially developed led a visitor back in time on a four-hour interactive walking tour, stopping at each of the four historic attractions. Along the way, visitors enjoyed tales of yesteryear's village life told by a chatty fisherman who seemed to have just stepped from the streets of 1914. As well, carefully chosen food and beverage tastings that connected to the history of Steveston and each location were served at each stop along the tour.

Investing in a Trial Run of the Experience:

Testing the experience was a critical component of the experience-design process. A variety of people were invited to participate in the trial run to assess the experience from a unique perspective:

- Site specialists to assess the accuracy of the content and its delivery.
- Experience designers to test the timing, group size, and identify any logistical issues.
- The storyteller (a local actor involved with the Heritage Society) to practice their delivery with a live audience.
- Tourism Richmond for first-hand knowledge before finalizing marketing materials.
- City of Richmond VIPs to see the new approach to site programming in action (i.e. tourism focus versus resident-driven).

The initial trial run was extremely helpful as it caught a few issues that could have been serious had it occurred "live":

- Staff provided by the sake maker did not speak English, hence an interpreter was added.
- The tour moved faster than anticipated.

- Some logistics in terms of movement through the sites to be improved upon.

After the initial tour, the experience was adjusted to include an interpreter for the sake component to address the language barrier, prior to delivering the experience to two separate groups: a familiarization (FAM) tour for local media and the travel trade organized by Tourism Richmond and a group comprised of paid visitors and others (mainly locals) who had won the tour in a contest run by Tourism Richmond.

Feedback was gathered via surveys sent to participants of both tours on completion of the experience. The surveys identified the elements that were most enjoyed and why, where improvements were needed, perceptions of value, and likelihood to recommend the experience. This information was used in a debrief session with all partners and the individuals who specifically delivered the experience. Following this, feedback was given for consideration and implementation prior to launch, including recommendations to:

- Change how the food partnerships are handled, with each site working with a food provider it has worked with before. This makes the food element logistically easier to address. One major change was the food offering provided at Britannia Shipyards. One site was serving smoked salmon with rice which requires the server to have Food Safe certification and while that was the case for the initial launch, it was seen as a potential limitation for the future. Instead, the food offer was changed to Chinese tea and a treat to allow any staff member to serve the food component.
- Change the starting location of the tour to Britannia Shipyards (improved flow, no doubling back).

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Change content delivery to incorporate on-site experts, which is expected to increase visitor engagement and provide a sense of historical accuracy/authenticity.

Lower the price of the experience from \$80 to \$65. Feedback from participants was that it was too expensive given the length of the tour (originally priced as a four-hour tour) and the food portion sizes. Net rates were lowered from \$60 to \$50.

RESULTS

The Steveston Heritage Experience was developed and trialed in 2018 then fully launched in 2019. Results, at the time of this writing, are limited to customer satisfaction with the FAM tour and the initial public tour, marketing initiatives, as well as a few unintended benefits.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION overall very positive resulting in a baseline Net Promoter Score of 54, which is higher than the City of Richmond itself. Comments provided were very positive and those related to possible improvements were taken into account for the 2019 launch.

MARKETING RESULTS while no direct comparisons are available, results were as good as or better than anticipated with local media providing strong exposure.

- A website landing page created for the experience had 1,821 unique visitors with a total of 2,052 views and an average time on the page of seven minutes for the eight-week period leading into and covering the initial experience deliveries.
- A blog post had 387 unique visitors and 427 page views with an average time of 11 minutes.
- A one-week Facebook campaign elicited more than 160,000 impressions, a reach of almost 75,000 with 1,512 unique link clicks, 786 reactions, 141 shares and 539 visits to the landing page.
- Twitter video tweet had 3,466 impressions, 670 views and 69 shares/retweets.
- Instagram contest giveaway resulted in 6,071 impressions, 1,680 video views, 153 “likes & saves” and 125 comments.
- A local BC media FAM trip yielded five earned media hits with a total circulation of 941,800.
- Exposure to the travel trade resulted in a new source of business for the city’s historic sites.

UNINTENDED BENEFITS The City of Richmond staff involved in this experience have a much better understanding of the tourism market and visitors have become a core target for these operators. Given how successful it has been, leadership at the City of Richmond sites are open to the development of visitor-focused experiences and new ideas from the team that developed this one.

WEBSITES

- www.visitrichmondbc.com/things-to-do/tours/steveston-heritage-experience
- www.richmond.ca/britannia
- www.richmond.ca/stevestontram
- www.richmond.ca/stevestonmuseum
- www.historicsteveston.ca
- www.gulfofgeorgiacannery.org
- www.visitrichmondbc.com
- www.visitrichmondbc.com/industry/stakeholders/scholarship-program