



## 2023 Annual Review

The year end review is an opportunity to look back on tourism successes and investments in Oxford County. Thank you everyone for your efforts to make Oxford County a desirable destination. Thank you to our partners that collaborated with us to stretch the marketing dollar and to create new product. Thank you to the writers and industry partners who celebrated Oxford County.

## Funding partnerships

Success happens through partnerships and collaboration allowing pooling of budgets and efficient operations to achieve group goals. Partnerships provided an additional \$61,000 to support Tourism Oxford activities in 2024. Thank you to the following partners.



### 2023 Ontario's Southwest Partnerships

Thank you Ontario's Southwest partnering on the following activities extending our marketing capacity and reach.

- Travel Media Visits: Travelling Mitch, Dobbernation Loves
- 4 Digital Advertising partnerships
- Research (audience, accommodations)
- Great Taste of Ontario membership
- The Foodies Group Familiarization Media Trip
- Destination Ontario Marketing Opportunity
- Photography & video

### March 2023 Completion of Ontario's Southwest Tourism Relief Fund

March 2023 wrapped up Oxford County's \$100,000 grant from [Ontario's Southwest's Tourism Relief Fund](#). The results of this work had impact that extends beyond the funding window including an expanded Cheese Trail, 3 new tourism experiences, business training, and new cycling product. Thank you Ontario's Southwest and Fed Dev Southern Ontario for investing in Oxford County.

**Funded by:**  
Federal Economic Development  
Agency for Southern Ontario

**Financé par :**  
Agence fédérale de développement  
économique pour le Sud de l'Ontario

**Canada** 

---

### Oxford Tourism Innovation Grant

In 2021 Community Futures Oxford and Tourism Oxford partnered to create the Tourism Innovation Grant. This program supports business investment

in tourism development by providing \$3000 grants to successful applicants.



Congratulations to the 2023 recipients and thank you for your investments in Oxford County.

- **Berrylicious Fruit Farm:** to renovate an outdoor space to accommodate an accessible area for their popular picnics
- **Gunn's Hill Artisan Cheese:** to create a permanent infrastructure for outdoor events and digital education signage
- **sixthirty-nine:** to elevate the Chef's Table by including new design elements and the history of the restaurant
- **Terra Nova Nordic Spa & Cafe:** to install self-sustaining structures to be used to provide unique spa treatments or dining experiences



The 2024 Tourism Innovation Grant is now accepting applications:

[Learn More](#)



## Great Taste of Ontario

The Great Taste of Ontario (GTOO) is the Culinary Tourism Alliance's award winning provincial marketing campaign promoting culinary road trips across Ontario with a digital passport program. As a partner, Tourism Oxford had a passport created for the Oxford County Cheese Trail. GTOO results included:

- The advertising value of this program was significant with 2.6 million impressions. Oxford was featured in a Destination Ontario campaign resulting in 1.7 million impressions, of which 735,197 were specific to the Oxford County Cheese Trail.
- In 2023: 939 passport downloads resulting in 3804 check-ins at Oxford County businesses.

Thank you to the Culinary Tourism Alliance and Ontario's Southwest for this partnership.



## Destination Ontario

Thank you Destination Ontario for providing several partnership opportunities in 2023:

- Oxford County hosted Spanish speaking freelance travel writers. They stayed overnight in the County and spent their time exploring the Oxford County Cheese Trail.
- Social media coverage from attending The Foodies Group Tour

## Oxford Fresh partnership

Oxford Fresh is a collaboration between Tourism Oxford and the Oxford County Federation of Agriculture to promote local food producers. Through this program a map is printed (next

printing in 2025), businesses can purchase an Oxford Fresh Laneway sign promoting shopping their farm, and free website listings are available to qualifying businesses.

- Two new partners joined in 2023 resulting in a new laneway sign being installed and 1 new website listing.
- Businesses can apply now for a 2024 laneway sign or a free website listing.



Apply for a sign or website listing

---

## Community Employment Services

Tourism Oxford is grateful for its relationship with Workforce Development at Community Employment Services (CES). This symbiotic relationship saw the following partnerships.

Tourism Oxford:

- attended 2 Oxford County workforce events promoting tourism employment opportunities to students.
- Sharing CES resources and training opportunities in the industry newsletter

CES delivered several specialized services to meet the needs of the Tourism Sector including:

- Employment video series highlighting services available to local tourism businesses. Tourism Oxford continues to share this series with local businesses. [Watch videos](#)
- Community Employment Services worked with Ontario Tourism Education Corporation (OTEC) to bring free accelerated resiliency and retention training to local tourism and hospitality workers. [Read more](#)
- Workforce Readiness Advancement Program (WRAP) was offered in partnership with Fanshawe College providing skills training for the Service Sector



COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Embrace Possibilities.

---

## Website Listings

Thank you to the 179 businesses who have a listing on [TourismOxford.ca](https://TourismOxford.ca) and the 26 who have invested in an Enhanced Listing. Any business that meets our eligibility criteria can have a free listing on [TourismOxford.ca](https://TourismOxford.ca). Tourism Oxford also offers enhanced listings which provide a professionally written blog highlighting your business. You can use this blog in your marketing and Tourism Oxford shares it as well on social media and in consumer newsletters.

Learn more & apply

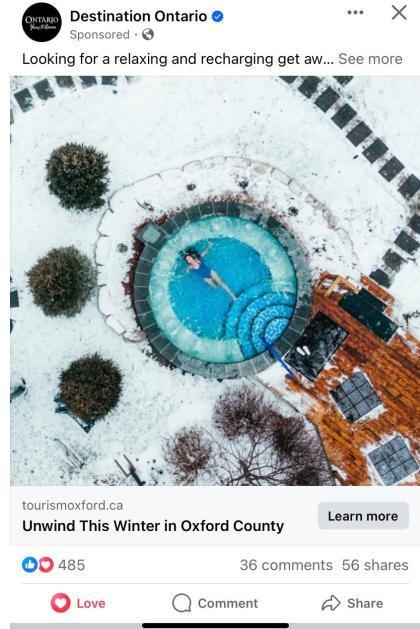
---

## Photography & Video

Oxford County's 2023 budget included a request for \$8000 in one-time funding to gather new photography and video at area attractions. This resulted in 34 photography and video sessions being held across Oxford County. Photography was shared with host businesses, Ontario's Southwest and Destination Ontario. Results of this initiative include



a Terra Nova Nordic Spa feature in the 2024 Destination Ontario Winter Campaign. Thank you to all of the businesses that participated and celebrated receiving their photographs.



[Rural Routes Application Form](#)

## 2 Rural Route Events in 2023

Another year of businesses organizing, hosting and marketing one-day events that embrace our rural routes. Program outcomes included:

- 8 different businesses collaborating
- 37% average increase in sales for participating businesses
- overall ad results for 2 events resulted in **210,569** impressions and **1,394** link clicks

Thank you to the 2023 Rural Routes participants!

Make sure to get your applications in for Rural Routes 2024 before March 1st!

## Visitor Signage Update

Tourism Oxford continued its work to install visitor information signage in Oxford County. New signage has been installed at:

- Downtown Woodstock (as pictured)
- Canada's Outdoor Farm Show
- The Holiday Inn Express digital signs
- City of Woodstock Special Events Portable Sign Partnership
- New Cheese Trail Partners (Golspie Dairy, Dad's Ice Cream, The Mill, Two Girls and a Cheese Shop, Tillsonburg Station Arts Centre, Betty's Marketplace, Whisk & Roll Bakery)

2024 projects include downtown Ingersoll, Embro, Tillsonburg and at key attractions.



# Award winners

## Oxford Tourism Awards

2023 was the second year of the Oxford Tourism Awards. Congratulations to all of the nominees and the following winners.

- **Special Event of the Year**, Udderly Ridiculous Farm Life
- **Tourism Partnership**, Udderly Ridiculous Farm Life
- **Tourism Partnership**, Beachville District Museum
- **Best New Tourism Product**, Terra Nova Nordic Spa and Cafe



Also a special thank you to Kintore Custom Hardwoods who created the awards. We encourage local businesses to consider applying in 2024.

[Read More](#)



## Ontario's Southwest Innovation Awards

Congratulations to the Beachville District Museum winner of the 2022 Ontario's Southwest Innovation Award

[Read more](#)

## Ontario Tourism Awards

Congratulations to the following Provincial Award Winners at the Ontario Tourism Summit.

### Indigo Lounge Wellness & Eatery

- 2022 Ontario Culinary Tourism Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Award

### Udderly Ridiculous Farm Life

- 2022 Ontario Culinary Tourism Experience Award
- 2022 Ontario Culinary Tourism Leadership Award



[Read more](#)

## Camping in Ontario Camper's



## Choice Awards

### Willow Lake Campground

- 2023 Customer Service Award



### Nuffield Canada Agricultural Scholarship

Congratulations to Cheryl Haskett for receiving a Nuffield Canada Agricultural Scholarship. Through this scholarship Cheryl will be creating a Canadian agri-tourism framework that will provide a consistent definition, criteria and standards of practice.

[Read more](#)

## Professional Development

### Workshops

Tourism Oxford had over 230 registrations for professional development workshops in 2023. Professional development workshops hosted included:

- Creating Safer Spaces
- 2023 Season Kick-Off, Partnerships
- Creating a Sustainable Community
- Rural Routes Partnerships
- Destination Making Program
- Cheese Trail AGM & Information Meetings
- Annual Tourism Awards
- Get to Know Tourism Oxford (2 sessions)
- Visiting Friends and Family Strategy Discussion



### Industry Newsletter

In 2023 Tourism Oxford reformatted the industry newsletter to better serve businesses, resulting in increased engagement & open rates. Over 350 businesses and partners subscribe getting valuable updates on funding, upcoming training, partnership opportunities, and more.

If you received this update by email you are a subscriber. If not [subscribe here](#).

## Investing in tourism

Thank you to all of the businesses that invested in Tourism in 2023. Your recognition of the tourism potential in Oxford County is greatly appreciated.

### New businesses

- Holiday Inn Express & Suites: began construction on their new sister hotel
- Wave Nordic at the Oxford Hills
- The Cheesy Cow, Woodstock
- Little Hobby Hill Farm
- Groove Decor, Ingersoll
- The Barkin Bougie, Ingersoll
- The Kiln Room, Woodstock
- Town of Ingersoll tent camping sites at

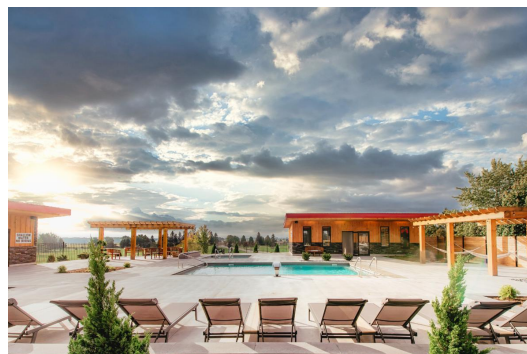


Centennial Park

- New Galma Dairy cheese factory

### Significant investments

- City of Woodstock had the first sculpture installed in Florence Carlyle Park
- Orange Door Acres expanded their retail shop, onsite butchering and started farming strawberries
- Makkink's Flower Farm opened their new café
- Haye's Maple Syrup opened up the farm for seasonal tours and breakfast
- Snyder's Family Farm: New entry gate system and additional visual elements
- Gunn's Hill Artisan Cheese: new outdoor pavillion
- Berrylicious Fruit Farm: New Marian's Tea experience and outdoor event space
- Ingersoll Comfort Inn renovations
- Farm to Table Dinner partnership between Thames River Melons, SixThirtyNine, and Canada Grills
- Transitions Equine: Moved to their own site bringing the experience outdoors
- Udderly Ridiculous Farm Life: addition of Muriel the Micro Cow & experience
- Terra Nova Nordic Spa: Greenhouse treatment and dining rooms
- Downtown Tillsonburg invested in new winter lights and banners
- Downtown Ingersoll installed a sculpture recognizing a terminus point on the underground railroad
- Thames River Melons offers u-pick apples
- Downtown Woodstock installed a stage
- Sixthirty-nine: Chef's Table upgrades



### Coming in 2024

- The Woodstock Art Gallery received funding for 4th floor renovations
- Wienerfest is expanding to a 2-day festival

Did we miss you? [Contact us](#) when you make a tourism investment. We will celebrate it in our industry newsletter

## Marketing Results



### The Oxford County Cheese Trail: Come for the Dairy, Stay for the Stories

The Oxford County Cheese Trail features over 30 small businesses, all very much worth visiting. It's one of Canada's most fun

### Media Coverage

Thank you to the numerous writers who took the time to explore and feature stories about Oxford County.

#### Media Partnerships with SWOTC:

- [Oxford County Cheese Trail Getaway Guide](#), Dobbernation Loves
- [Best Things to do in Tillsonburg](#), Dobbernation Loves
- [Discover Southwest Ontario One Farm at a Time](#), The Foodies Group
- [Top Accommodation in Ontario's Southwest...](#), Traveling Mitch
- [The Oxford County Cheese Trail: Come for the Dairy...](#), Ultimate Ontario
- [A Day on the Farm Trail 5 OxfordCounty Gems to Explore](#), The Foodies Group

food trails!

Read More

Media and Influencer Partnerships

- [Cozy vibes in Oxford County](#), Dine Magazine
- [The Oxford County Cheese Trail](#) Dine Magazine
- [Amira De Vera](#) Visit
- [MyTravelling Backpack](#) Visit

Earned Media:

- [Fall Family Fun in Ontario](#) Globe and Mail
- [Can't Miss Ontario Destinations for Those...](#) Globe and Mail
- [Coyle's Country Store](#), Stephanie Galt Loving Local
- [These are the 2024 travel trends say industry experts \(thestar.com\)](#), Maryam Siddiqi

## Advertising

Marketing campaigns were run in all 12 months resulting in 6.5+ million digital impressions and 305,000 in print circulation. Advertising highlights include:

- A Jan-March Winter campaign was held, in partnership with Ontario's Southwest. It was our marketing firm's highest performing winter campaign with 450,000 impressions. With the success of this campaign, Tourism Oxford is in market for winter in 2024, in partnership with Destination Ontario and Ontario's Southwest.
- Advertisements were placed with Daytripping, Dine Magazine, EatDrink, Local Flavours Guide, Ontario By Bike and Whats on Woodstock.
- A holiday campaign was run promoting local events and shopping local. This included a new partnership with Theatres and Oxford Creative Connections.
- Publications reprinted in 2023 included Ride Oxford, Oxford Outdoors, and the Oxford Fresh Map.
- December billboard ads were placed in Oxford County and Hamilton.



## Outside the Box Tactics

Tourism Oxford is open to unique approaches to reach our audience. Unique opportunities in 2023 included:

- **The Farm Trail:** Tourism Oxford partnered with The Foodies Group and Ontario's Southwest to host a media trip to explore [The Farm Trail](#) stops located in Oxford County. Bus passengers included travel media, corporate events planners and industry contacts including Destination Ontario. This event resulted in an online article and over 150 social media posts promoting the Farm Trail and Oxford County Stops.
- Paris to Ancaster (P2A) is an annual cycling race that travels trails, farm tracks and gravel roads from Paris to Ancaster. In 2022 the race needed to re-route and approached Blandford-Blenheim township and the County of Oxford to use local roads. Township and County staff provided support to make this route change possible. In 2023 the P2A became Cycle Canada's first Canadian Gravel Championship race. With so many cyclists coming to this event, Tourism Oxford and the Heart of Ontario (our neighbouring Regional Tourism Organization) partnered with Gravelocity to offer pre and post race Gravel Road cycling tours for racers to explore more of the region. While the weather was not in our favour, the tours were popular with attendees. We look forward to working with P2A again in 2024.
- The Oxford County Cheese Trail was the featured cheese supplier for the Great Taste of Ontario booth at Food & Drinks anniversary celebration. This event hosted 150 media and 350 consumers. Thank you to the Culinary Tourism Alliance for allowing us to partner in this celebration.
- We were excited to have Alon Gurman from the Elmhurst Inn and Spa approach Tourism Oxford



for a unique travel media visit exploring three Farhi Holdings Hotels in Ontario's Southwest. Tourism Oxford brought the idea so regional partners. Farhi Holdings, Ontario's Southwest, Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island, Tourism London, and Tourism Oxford partnered to host Travelling Mitch/Ultimate Ontario for a three day trip to the region highlighting the hotels and things to do in the region. An additional article about the Oxford County Cheese Trail was also published.

## TourismOxford.ca Traffic



In 2023 TourismOxford.ca had 212,402 sessions (**3.62%** decrease). This decrease can be attributed to a decreased advertising reach 8 million impressions in 2022 vs 6.5 million impressions in 2023.

While website traffic did not increase there are still positives in 2023. How people are coming to the site indicates improvements with social media and Search Engine Optimization (SEO). SEO improvements brought 32% of traffic to the website from search results. There also was a **6%** increase in traffic from Social Media and increase in referral traffic which is tied to Oxford hosting a number of travel writers.

### Work continues

In 2024 Tourism Oxford will implement the results of a website assessment to further improve the customer experience on TourismOxford.ca.

### Submit your consumer offers:

The Tourism Website includes an offers page. Any business with a listing can submit an offer for this page. Offers must be valid for 1 month minimum. [Contact us](#) for details to take advantage of this opportunity.

---

## Social media highlights

### Subscribers/Followers

(TourismOxford 21,682, Oxford Fresh 3.3K)

- 4,460 Newsletter subscribers
- 18,468 YouTube minutes viewed & 42 new followers

### Content Created:

- Oxford Insider Newsletter (15 newsletters, 1249 average views, 45% open rate, 5.8% click-thru rate.)
- Oxford Fresh Newsletter (1417 average views, 49% open rate, 6% click-thru rate.)
- 80 reels on Instagram
- 1 in-house video featuring 5 local attractions



## 2024 Oxford County Business Plan Approved



Oxford County Council approved the 2024 Business Plan and Budget. Through this Business Plan Tourism Oxford will provide its core services in management, product development and marketing.

2024 Business Plan highlights for Tourism include:

### **Develop and begin implementation of Tourism Strategy**

Complete research and develop a five-year Tourism Strategy for Oxford County. Components include consultation (meetings, surveys) with tourism businesses and residents and a review of existing reports/strategies, and research. Tourism Oxford's last strategy was prepared in 2020. Since then Tourism Oxford has updated the strategy and supporting reports for the development of the 5 year strategy in 2024.

### **Implement Sustainable Tourism Strategy Recommendations**

Start implementation of sustainability recommendations resulting from the GreenStep Destination Assessment. The assessment and strategy (completion February 2024) was made possible with a grant provided by the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario.

### **Modernize Visitor Services**

Improve visitor information services with increased signage and improved online customer experience. Install visitor information signage in municipalities at key locations. Develop and implement a website content strategy with the goal to improve customer service and reduce staff time maintaining content.

Other activities include partnership advertising with Ontario's Southwest and Destination Ontario, development of a new partnership program and merging of our visitor map and lure brochure.

Oxford County Business Plan and Budget

*Thank you for all of your support in 2023  
Emily, Karlee and Meredith*

Tourism Oxford | 519-539-9800 x3355 | [tourism@oxfordcounty.ca](mailto:tourism@oxfordcounty.ca) | [Industry website](#) | [Consumer website](#)

STAY CONNECTED



Tourism Oxford | 21 Reeve St., P. O. Box 1614, Woodstock, N4S 7Y3 Canada

[Unsubscribe \[tourism@oxfordcounty.ca\]\(mailto:unsubscribe@tourism@oxfordcounty.ca\)](mailto:unsubscribe@tourism@oxfordcounty.ca)

[Update Profile](#) | [Our Privacy Policy](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by [tourism@oxfordcounty.ca](mailto:tourism@oxfordcounty.ca) powered by



Try email marketing for free today!