

NEWSFLASH!

HeartSong Travel is about to launch *your Local* readers are the first to know!

by **Sandra Phinney**

Colleague Melanie Chambers and I are about to launch a new website called HeartSong Travel. It will go live the first day of spring. It's all about the joy of Canadians getting up close and personal with people and places, seeing with new eyes, and sharing our stories.

In a nutshell, we're challenging Canadians to: Go somewhere in your own backyard; Do something that makes your heart sing; and Tell us about it.

Why HeartSong Travel now? Both individually and collectively, we can use something to cheer us up; something that will help us connect in meaningful, positive ways, and make our hearts sing. And, by sharing our discoveries, we will create a community of people from coast to coast who

are passionate about Canada and what this great country has to offer.

When someone asks Chambers where she's from, even though she's lived in Ontario most of her adult life, she responds, "I'm a Maritimer." A Newfoundlander by birth who grew up primarily in Nova Scotia, she admits that it's always a point of pride to say she's an East Coaster.

With this kind of spirit, we want people to write about their HeartSong Travel moments. "You know how, because you are connectors. So open your hearts and share your stories with the rest of the country, the way you always do."

How's that for a challenge?

If you're not sure what a HeartSong Travel story looks

like, check out these two samples that will be on the website. The first one is written by Margo MacGregor; the second one by yours truly.

FAST AND FREE ON THE HALIFAX HARBOUR

The summer of 2018 in Dartmouth was hotter than any summer I could remember and work was taking over my life. Little time was left for playing in nature. I needed to do something fun, different, and to enjoy the beautiful summer days before they were gone.

My worksite was on the Halifax Harbour and day after day I kept watching people tear around on jet skis. I actually thought they were jerks and wondered why people would do that. A new watercraft rental company had opened up in Dartmouth, just five minutes from my house so I thought: OK, just take a look at their website, see what it's all about.

My first thought was, damn that's expensive! Ninety-five dollars to rent a jet ski for an hour? That's crazy. I'm used to paying \$50 a full day for a kayak or bike rental. But I couldn't let it go. I knew my husband would love it, and why work so hard if you can't splurge once in a while? I booked us each our own craft for an hour on my next day off.

We biked down to the waterfront and were greeted by a super friendly staff member and offered a choice of machines. John picked the "fun one" (fast and sporty) and I picked the "comfortable one" (safe and sturdy.) We

signed waivers, got a brief safety lesson and equipment overview, advice on different places to go, and were sent on our way. Immediate joy! The speed, the sun, the salt air, the view, and the freedom!

We headed straight for George's Island, a National Historic Site in the middle of Halifax Harbour. We did a lap around and got comfortable on our machines and of course tested out what full throttle felt like – very bouncy, and so reckless it was exhilarating!

We got up close and personal with a massive cruise ship and started to work our way along the Halifax waterfront, zooming under the bridges and towards the Bedford Basin where they were launching a new navy vessel. We then did a lap around the navy ship but kept our distance from the police and Coast Guard patrol vessels.

Before we knew it, time was running out. What to do with our last few minutes of joy riding? There was only one clear option for John – find the best wakes to jump. There was plenty of traffic in the harbour and wakes to chase, so for the finale we skipped back and forth along the wake of the Halifax Harbour ferry.

So yes, we were those jerks, and loved every second of it: John going super-fast and trying to get as much air as possible; me just happy to skip along and pretend I was flying. When it was time to return, my face hurt from smiling and my body was vibrating from holding on for dear life.

Back at the wharf we collected our bags and bikes and



Margo MacGregor photos



walked to New Scotland Brewery for a pint and to immediately re-live the best parts of that exciting hour. We both agreed it was well worth the money, fully accepting that we loved being “those jerks” flying around on the Halifax Harbour – right in our backyard.

HEAVENLY MOMENTS

Picture this: My backyard for a few days is in Fredericton, New Brunswick, and I’m staying at the lovely (and newish) Hilton Garden Inn located smack downtown.

First day, I get up at 6 a.m., head out to do some interviews and photo shoots, and am dog-tired by the time I return. It’s around 4 p.m., and I’m hankering for a cappuccino. Just don’t have the energy to scoot around the city to find a coffee shop. So I go to the dining room and peer into the kitchen where I see a young chef is prepping stuff for dinner. I ask, “What are the chances of getting a cappuccino?”

He grins, says, “Hold on.” Enter head server. I ask the question again, adding, “And I’d love to take it to my room.” He says, “Let’s see what I can do,” pirouettes, and disappears. While he’s gone, I walk around the dining room. A water glass catches my eye. And another. And another. They all have curlicue things imbedded in the glass. Only it’s not a design in the glass, it’s a reflection from some crazy lighting fixtures

on the ceiling. I am mesmerized.

The dining room is full of these reflections. It was surrealistic. Bloody good thing there was no one around to see me going nose-to-nose with a bunch of water tumblers taking macro shots.

When the chap comes back with cappuccino in hand, I realize that my wallet is in my room. I feel silly and babble something about not having a cent on me but I’ll be back for dinner later and could I put that on my dinner tab? “Of course!” he says, “And let me know what you think of the cappuccino. It’s a new machine, and the first time I’ve made one.” I take a quick sip, grin, and give him a thumbs up.

Back in my room I realize that he doesn’t have a clue what my name is, if I’m actually staying here, or if I really will be back.

Postscript: Yes, I returned to the restaurant in the hotel later that evening for dinner. Remember the fellow who made that cappuccino earlier? Meet Talmadge Arthur, who tells me Talmadge is a Scottish name. Check out his photo! I should have asked him to move a tad to his right and he’d have a halo above his head. He deserves one.

(You can check Heartsong at www.heartsongtravel.ca.)



Left: Talmadge Arthur, cappuccino king. Right: Reflections as art. (Sandra Phinney photos)