

Partnering to support local tourism

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Wellington County, along with three other nearby regions, has a new piece of technology that is supporting local tourism.

Regional Tourism Organization Four (RTO4), an organization solely dedicated to growing the tourism industry and economy in Wellington, Waterloo, Perth, and Huron, recently launched an online booking service for tourism attractions, events, and accommodations in the four areas. Marc Armstrong, chairperson of RTO4, said the organization came up with the idea for an online reservation portal after deciding that the organization wanted to use their funding to create something that would leave a 'legacy', and they knew incorporating technology was the best way.

"Technology was absolutely one of the key things," he said. "We recognize that in this day and age, everybody is very much into online booking and instant gratification. When they book their tickets they want to see that they have it now."

But not everybody is so smitten with the web, so the online booking service will also be supported by a regional call centre, specifically, the Stratford Festival's call centre, which has some 60 years of experience in serving tourists in the region.

"It just speaks to the whole spirit of cooperation that we've seen coming forward ever since the RTO4 was created, because virtually all of the different counties are represented on the board and it's a very diverse board, and it's just been so nice to see the enthusiasm with which everyone has embraced this thing," Armstrong said. "And now that we've got the partnership with the festival, it allows us to really showcase the entire region using their system and their expertise so that we don't have to have an unknown call centre. This will be people that are knowledgeable about the region as well."

Another partnership that has arisen from the online booking service is one with the University of Guelph's School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, which will conduct a benchmarking study to measure the success of the new reservation portal.

The platform is at no cost to the different vendors participating, from B&Bs, inns, and hotels, to tourist attractions and events.

The online booking service can be found at: www.reservations.bettertravel.ca. To learn more about RTO4, visit www.betterweekending.ca.
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