

SOUTH SHORE BREAKER

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Wednesday, July 12, 2023

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5

Staycations embrace fun, affordable plans

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With the rising costs of travel, gas and hotel rooms, summer vacation may have a different look this year.

Many people cannot afford the hotel room or Airbnb, plus the restaurants, gas and everything else right now, so we might see more people staying closer to home and in their own province right now. They will likely be doing more one- or two-day road trips, camping or daily trips rather than the big one to two weeks of summer vacation plans that used to happen.

This is what Kerra Aucoin Mansfield of Dartmouth, N.S. predicts. Aucoin Mansfield operates the website Explore Like a Tourist N.S. and has recently published a travel guide under the same name, with more than 700 ideas for things to do, see, eat and experience in Nova Scotia.

Many are realizing we have amaz-

ing things right here and we can have an amazing vacation right in our own backyard, said Aucoin Mansfield.

"Why travel abroad if you have never experienced your own backyard?" she asked.

This is where the staycation comes in. According to Aucoin Mansfield, staycations can mean day trips, afternoon trips, road trips, overnight trips or multiple day trips. It just means staying close to home, whether that's in your county or your province as a whole.

When it comes to picking a place to go for a staycation, there are some things a family needs to take into consideration.

- How many days or hours do you have?
- What is your budget?
- What activities do you like to do?
- Do you want to try something new or revisit somewhere you have been before?

■ Do you wish to do activities for all ages? For kids? For adults only?

After you come up with the parameters of your staycation, the next step is deciding where to go and getting everyone in the family on board.

In her family, Aucoin Mansfield said a staycation decision must be a compromise. For example, she and her husband like to visit craft breweries, wineries and coffee shops; however, they have a five-year old. So, they know they need to also go somewhere they can find a pool, lake or ocean, playgrounds, food for kids and something fun for her to do too.

This summer, Aucoin Mansfield suggested people explore wineries and breweries, as there are so many in Nova Scotia. That, and do a ton of hiking. Over the years, her family has enjoyed visiting the Iona and Tatamagouche/Malagash area and the Annapolis Valley.

As Aucoin Mansfield is from Cape Breton and her husband is from the South Shore, those are the areas they spend the most time in. However, every summer they also pick an area or town they are not familiar with and explore. This year, the gondola in Ingonish, Cape Breton is on her bucket list as well as the Eastern Shore and Joggins.

To help people better make staycation decisions and to give them a focus while out exploring, Aucoin Mansfield has created checklists of things to do in each area of Nova Scotia. The travel guide is organized by region and activity, so you can quickly and easily find ideas for your trip.

Explore Like a Tourist is for all ages and is for anyone looking to discover hidden gems in Nova Scotia. Details for purchase are through her website, explorelikeatourist.ca or through Amazon.