

NEWS LOCAL

Georgian Bay coastal route mapped out for tourists

Hannah Vanderkooy

Monday, June 4, 2012 2:26:17 EDT PM



Image: 1 of 3



Collingwood mayor Sandra Cooper with the coastal route signs that will be located around Georgian Bay. Hannah Vanderkooy/Collingwood Enterprise-Bulletin

More than 30,000 islands, 2,000 kilometres of shoreline, and two UNESCO World Biosphere Reserves can be found along the Georgian Bay, making it full of tourist attractions.

The Georgian Bay Destination Development Partnership is intent on marketing these tourist attractions to the world by installing 97 coastal route signs around Georgian Bay.

In addition to the coastal route signs, 27 interpretive signs are located around Georgian Bay featuring tourist attractions like the suspension bridge at Scenic Caves, and scenic lookouts like the one at the top of Blue Mountain, and Millennium Park in Collingwood, as a way to

encourage visitors to learn more about the area.

Two organizations involved, Blue Mountain Village Association and Georgian Triangle Tourism Association, held a launch on Monday atop the escarpment at the lookout point at Grey Road 119 and Swiss Meadows Road to celebrate the project's completion.

"We recognize, as marketing professionals, we have to market an experience," said Don Braden, president of Blue Mountain Village Association.

Linda Simpson, executive director of the Georgian Triangle Tourism Association, said having bilingual signs is important to attracting a wider audience.

"We know beaches are our key draw for international and Quebec markets," said Simpson. "It's about marketing to something bigger, and bigger is of course the Georgian Bay.

"Signage is so important for getting tourists around this area."

The idea to develop a regional approach to tourism in the Georgian Bay area came from Scenic Caves owner Rob Thornburn who saw the need to bring people into this area after he opened Scenic Caves.

"I had a tremendous product," said Thornburn, adding he didn't believe it received enough exposure.

Thornburn's idea was to develop this area to be a place known around the world for tourism.

"We're trying to say Georgian Bay has everything tourists want," said Thornburn. "If you come here you'll find a whole bunch of stuff to do."

Thornburn started connecting different areas around Georgian Bay to work together with the common goal of bringing people to the region as a whole.

"Those regions that are participating aggressively in the area are benefiting," said Thornburn.

Simpson said working with other regions has encouraged them to send tourists to other places along the Georgian Bay coastal route.

"We see people going through Collingwood all the time, and they're going east or west," said Simpson. "We're OK with sending them outside our area."

- hannah.vanderkooy@sunmedia.ca

Twitter: @hannahvander

