



The Bear Train - Incredible Tourism Opportunities

The Bear Train exceptional wilderness heritage rail corridor appeals to trending tourism markets: Indigenous, cultural, Franco-Ontarian, accessible, eco/green, winter, and heritage.

Indigenous Tourism

The passenger train would be branded as the Mask-wa-Oo-ta-ban (Bear Train). International tourists in particular are looking for authentic Indigenous destinations and products which reflect First Nations culture. Tourism industry research shows that more than one in three visitors to Canada are interested in an authentic Indigenous tourism experience.

Cultural Tourism (e.g., Group of Seven events)

The Bear Train passenger train service is essential for Group of Seven tourism development. Ontario has re-branded its tourism using the Group of Seven legacy. The Group of Seven painters traveled by train into the Canadian wilderness and their art displayed those landscapes. The rail corridor offers many possibilities for the development of other cultural tourism events.

Franco-Ontarian Tourism

This rail corridor serves Hearst (95% Francophone) and Dubreuilville (100% Francophone). Both municipalities have already developed Francophone experiences and products designed to attract tourists. The Bear Train would be a perfect vehicle to bring people to tourism destinations such as Hearst which will receive recently announced federal government funding.

Accessible Tourism

Ensuring that transportation is inclusive and accessible to all would enable older adults to travel more often. Research shows they spend more money on trips than other age groups. It is a missed opportunity not to have an accessible rail service available. Without passenger rail service, many remote wilderness outdoor experiences are inaccessible to older adults.

Eco/Green Tourism

Tourists wishing to travel with a lighter carbon footprint are attracted to "train-in" destinations. This rail corridor has over 400 km of these types of destinations. Eco-green tourists don't want to have to reach these areas by float plane, which is more polluting.

Winter Tourism

The Bear Train would be able to accommodate skiers traveling to Searchmont Ski Resort from Sault Ste. Marie. The Snow Train, which had high ridership, could be re-established out of Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst and local hoteliers could reap the benefits.

Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism is a growing sector of tourism involving travel to historic sites. Tourists from Ontario, from across Canada and from overseas are looking for more unique destinations to visit. The ACR Corridor is such a place with not only Indigenous territories, vast forests and interesting wildlife, but also many fascinating sites where the Group of Seven painters chose to create some of their most famous paintings. Without a passenger train, many of these sites are not accessible. It is a great loss to our region's economy, especially considering the level of interest in heritage sites throughout the world.

A process is underway to have the Bear Train railway corridor designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. Ways it meets World Heritage selection criteria:

- the land has been traditional territory of both Anishinaabe and Cree First Nations for thousands of years and of Metis people for hundreds of years. On it are located sacred places that have highly significant spiritual importance
- the corridor passes through the location where the famous Canadian "Group of Seven" artists first decided to become the "Group of Seven" when they were living in a boxcar on the train from 1918
- crosses the 2 most important watersheds in Northern Ontario: emptying in James Bay and Lake Superior
- passes through 2 major Ontario Forest types: Boreal & Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forests
- traverses 2 Ecozones: Hudson Plains & Boreal Shield Terrestrial Ecozones
- traverses the Pre-Cambrian Shield resulting in remarkable landscapes
- passes through Chapleau Game Preserve - world's largest
- of significance for francophone settlers who arrived in the early 1900s in Hearst and Dubreuilville—2 municipalities that are still 95% francophone

Become a part of bringing back this vital tourism asset **NOW** so that tourism potential along this rail line can be realized.