

## Creating a memorable Visitor Experience: Identifying a Local Distinctive Edge for your business or community.

Visitors seeking authentic experiences want to feel special and do things that directly involve them more actively. They particularly want to see things that are different to their daily lives or allow them to reconnect.\*

From the visitor's perspective one village or town can seem much like another – this lack of difference was found to be a key reason why people were less likely to take domestic holidays (Visitor Economic Taskforce).

There is much to talk about in each community; its history, landscape, people and activities to enjoy. These are the features which can help your business and community stand out, they are the features which will signal you are different and special.

One way of creating a memorable visitor experience is by finding out what are the 'Locally Distinctive' features that surround your area and then selecting those which relate best to your business. For community groups that would mean connecting with the features that best represent a sense of place; where you live and how you live.

**Tip:** Using the chart below

Take a stroll around your village or town and note the buildings, parks, monuments or landscapes which mean something to you. Try to think of at least 5 to write in the first column of the chart.

Then select at least 3 'Locally distinctive' features which could be themes which relate best to your business, and put them in the second column. Then consider areas they could be applied, and put them in the third column.

You can also visit the local historical society or contact them and discuss these features.

For landscapes, contact the National Parks, and learn about the area.

<i>Locally Distinctive features</i>	<i>Distinctive themes</i>	<i>Applied to business areas</i>

**For example:**

*The Ribbon Gang were convict bushrangers located around the Bathurst region in 1830. They were trying to escape the tyranny of convict life. There were many Irishmen in the gang and they wore ribbons in their hats as a sign of defiance.*

Using the gang's history we can create an Experience. This should be positive, uplifting and where appropriate fun. Australians like to support the underdog as they hold a strong sense of fair play.

*Cafes or restaurants could:*

- Create a display of straw hats with ribbons (as worn by the gang)
- Place a copy of government convict rations regulations of the time on the back of the menu (you can get such things from the State Library)
- Dedicate a dish to the gang
- Run a regular folk music evening for locals and visitors with a theme of convict and bushranger songs e.g. Wild Colonial Boy.

*Accommodation providers could:*

- Have a library of books on the Ribbon Gang and other bush rangers
- Dedicate a breakfast dish to the gang
- Name the rooms after the gang and have a straw hat with ribbons on each door
- Frame a newspaper story of the time about the gang in the rooms.

*Community groups could:*

- Write a self guided tour for families and couples to discover the places used by the Ribbon Gang (make sure you write the tour in the first person as if spoken by a member of the gang to bring it to life)
- Run an annual event that celebrates their struggle, encourage stall holders to wear straw hats with ribbons. Include a 'decorated straw hat competition' for adults and one for children
- Create a range of local produce wine, olives, chutneys which special labels just for the occasion.

**Thinking about it**

Whichever features you decide on for your business or community it is important to add interpretation that engages the visitor with the theme.

For example: associate the Ribbon Gang with Australia's Irish Catholic community and Irish republican support in Australia. Or link the Ribbon Gang to other rebellions in your region, their causes and what life was like for those involved. You can easily do this by producing a little booklet, dedicating a page on your website. Again refer to the local historical society who will be delighted to help.

Of course there are many opportunities to extend these actions into social media, for example putting photographs onto Facebook. The key thing is to let visitors see and read about your 'Local Differences' and to encourage them to engage with them.

## Next

Use the chart above and consider those features which stand out for you. Then list areas of your business which do not feel very different and could be improved (be honest!). You can contact Christopher to discuss ideas.

\* This could be a reconnection to a whole variety of things such as:

- The local community
- Personal family history
- The natural environment
- Special interest hobbies
- Food, wine and art

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