

Ticonderoga Assessment

Updated November 2008

Intro Statement

Ticonderoga is on the cusp of developing a viable tourism economy. It has long had an anchor product in Fort Ticonderoga. It now has a good foothold in lodging – the new Best Western.

The region is rich in history – which defines it and allows it to stand as a world-unique destination – the specific history related to Ticonderoga is directly tied to the evolution of the United States as a nation and includes some very exciting developments and moments. Ticonderoga has a unique, historical, turn-of-the-century downtown that can be leveraged (now that both the lodging and anchor experience can be used as basis) into a zone that is rich in opportunities for visitors and small scale entrepreneurs (dining, shopping, guided history tours, equipment rental).

Ticonderoga also has a wealth of Adirondack experiences that can be achieved in the town and from the town as a base camp. It will take these experiences (along with additional history-related experiences) to develop a year-round tourism economy, especially when considering the winter months.

While Ticonderoga has the combination of history and great outdoor experiences to drive a great tourism economy, recent history shows a struggling tourism economy. The new Best Western, coupled with the Fort, create a new opportunity to support increased patronage of other existing tourism businesses and stimulate the development of more tourism related businesses. When those other products begin to come on line, there will be demand for more lodging. And the spiral up can continue in a managed way to achieve a vibrant economy while protecting goals important to Ticonderoga.

Snapshot of Current Tourism

This is an evolving document – more will be added as it comes to the table through research and community discussion. The following lists are not prioritized.

Infrastructure

- Fort Ticonderoga
- New Best Western Hotel (54 rooms)
- Super 8 Motel
- Downtown
- La Chute River and walking trail
- Lake Champlain
- Lake George
- Ferry
- Additional independently owned lodging facilities (Stone House, Circle Court, Belfred Motel, Green Acres)
- Campsites (Rogers Rock, Putts Pond, Brookwood)
- Four Corners
- Amtrak
- Public Beach
- Golf Course
- Two State boat launch sites (one on each lake)
- Bi-centennial Park and waterfalls
- Two museums (1888 Heritage Museum, Hancock House)
- Municipal Airport

Experiences

- Fort Ticonderoga
- La Chute River and walking trail
- Museum
- Ferry
- Fishing and Hunting
- Motor Boating
- Canoeing and Kayaking
- Mount Defiance
- Snowmobiling
- Walking
- Biking
- Hiking
- Golfing
- Camping
- Swimming
- Annual Events

Products

- Fort Ticonderoga
- Hotels
- Limited Dining
- Limited Shopping
- Museums
- RV Park
- Canoe and Kayak Rental
- Locally grown produce

Gaps

- There are not enough ways to interact with Ti's exciting history and outdoors
- Fall is beautiful in the region – need “products” related to fall
- While Ti is rich in experiences (more needed related to history) there are not enough opportunities that make those experiences products – nor enough supporting products to capitalize on Fort visitors and overnight travelers.
- More dining needed
- Bike (mountain and touring) rental
- Outdoor low-impact sports
- Hospitality education
- Organized tours – packaged/professionally guided tours (start to finish)
- More “current” lodging inventory

Seasons

- While the Fort now has the capacity to be open year round, the major season for that type of experience is late spring through fall.
- Mars Center at the Fort is year round
- Fall foliage
- Access to VAST (Vermont snowmobiling trail system)
- Winter holds potential now that hotel is in place
 - Cross Country Skiing
 - Snowmobiling
 - Ice Fishing

Quality

- Now that the Best Western is up and running, Ti has the potential to leverage shopping and dining in downtown. Time to fix up, make pedestrian friendly.

Rates

Competitiveness

- The new hotel opens the door for the creation of a competitive destination. There is now the beginning of a basis to attract people (year round) with the promise of experiences to have and the tourism infrastructure to support lodging, dining, shopping, etc.

Positive and Negative Impacts

- The new hotel adds a dimension to the economy that facilitates longer stays and yields more spending for dining, gifts, and experience-related products.

Benefits

- Before the new hotel, most of the benefits fell to the owners of Fort Ticonderoga, with little fallout to the town (except for jobs held by local residents).

Visitors (demographics)

Visitor Satisfaction

- Some frustration with lack of products and services for visitors.

Potential New Products and Experiences

- Water Mill
- Destination Resort
- Working Museum that produces a product in the old fashioned way
- Maple Harvest (participatory)
- Cross Country Skiing
- Artists and artisan market
- Other history-related products (including guided tours)
- Cross country skiing if River Walk were tracked
- French Saw Mill
- Airport offers opportunities for scenic tours
- Ticonderoga pencil
- Family activities/kid friendly
- Tow rope and snow making in Centennial Park for sledding
- Woodsmen competitions
- Scottish games
- Snowmobile races (weather dependent)
- Boat races
- Recreation away from the lake – sportsmen's paradise (ponds) for canoe, fishing, paddling
- Skate park

Community Wants and Needs

- Strong second leg to the economy to balance dependency on mill jobs
- Movie theater
- Year-round tourism economy
- Places for young people (high school age) to congregate, recreate
- Grocery store
- Specialty market

Community Concerns

- Need to keep the integrity of the destination
- Need to keep a sense of what Ticonderoga is about – including the families that have been there for several generations
- Hospitality education

Visitor Perspectives

Products and Experiences that Contribute to a Sense of Destination

Ticonderoga is unique in the sense that it has an exciting history that has the potential of “putting people in airplane seats”. There are not nearly enough products to support that destination appeal yet, but the potential is there. The Fort is a good anchor experience, but new experiences that match up with more modern tourism styles would be great additions and be necessary to make this destination a primary target of travel.

Products and Experiences that build on Essex County/Adirondack Sense of Destination

The Adirondack Experience is a mix of great pristine Northeast nature, coupled with uniquely Adirondack communities and active outdoor experiences. Ticonderoga’s history contributes to the sense of grounding the Adirondack experience. The great natural vistas, the trails, the lakes, the fall foliage, the historic downtown, the covered bridge in the park, and the maple sugar heritage all lend to the sense of a great Adirondack landscape. The experience is there – more of that needs to be converted to product.

Products that Conflict with Destination Appeal

Fortunately Ticonderoga does not have tacky developments that would detract from its sense of destination.

What Makes This (or Would Make This) a Destination

Ticonderoga is about history. If that theme were to be expanded into more products and experiences, this destination will have an ample set of target patrons. That can be augmented by Adirondack outdoor products and experiences, but it is history that will put Ti on the tourism map.

Visitor Satisfaction (what contributes, what detracts, what is needed)

Prior to the development of the new hotel, Ticonderoga was essentially a pass through town. People would drive through to access the Fort or the ferry, but had little reason to spend time or money in the town. There was (and is) frustration with the lack of expected services in town (dining, shopping, etc.)

Other Issues from Local Input

Summary

Ticonderoga has incredible potential to move quickly to achieve significant gains in terms of products and tourism's contribution to the local economy. The community is engaged and actively working to design and implement the future.

There are a number of actively engaged organizations working toward a brighter future for Ticonderoga – so many that they sometimes overlap turf. Those organizations do have energy and momentum – and they are not just talking – they are getting things done.

Ticonderoga has an unclear relationship with the Fort. It is clear that the residents of the town do want the fort to succeed – and they have many ideas on how that could take place. It has also been made clear by the fort that it wants to make its own decisions, seemingly without too much input from the town.

Given that environment, Ticonderoga needs to chart a path toward tourism success that will work, with or without the success of the fort. Given that environment; Ticonderoga needs to step up and take ownership of its huge piece of American history; develop products related to that history; court visitors related to that history; spawn additional dining, lodging, and shopping opportunities related to that history; and take charge of its own tourism future.

The assumed success at the fort will only make things better – as closely located history products and experiences will act symbiotically and help all perform better than any one could on its own.

The future is indeed bright for Ticonderoga – assuming it seizes opportunity and runs with it!