This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Fri Oct 30 21:19:40 2026 / +0000 GMT

Headwaters Region gets a new tourism campaign centred on local breweries

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Headwaters region is introducing a new tourism initiative designed to showcase its growing craft beverage scene while driving traffic into local downtowns.

The Headwaters Crafted Journey, curated by Central Counties Tourism, brings together eight breweries, cideries, and wineries across Caledon, Erin, and Dufferin County in a passport-style experience that rewards exploration over time.

Chuck Thibeault, executive director of Central Counties Tourism, said that the journey begins with a passport.

?It looks like an actual passport,? he said. ?As the person travels from brewery to brewery, they get a stamp in their passport, and when they've completed and gone to each of the stops, they take a picture of their stamped passport and upload it to a contest page, and then in the fall, we'll be doing a random draw to give away some prize packages, which are gift certificates for each of the producers.?

The format is designed to benefit both visitors and locals. For out-of-town guests, the journey provides a clear, curated path through the region, turning a day trip into a broader tour of small towns, countryside, and main streets.

Rather than travelling for a single attraction, visitors are given multiple reasons to stay longer, spend more, and return. For residents, the passport offers a structured way to discover breweries and attractions they may not have tried before, keeping more spending within the local economy. Every community working together is the best way to keep people visiting the wider region, Thibeault said.

?When it comes to destination development and tourism, the visitors don't see walls between the towns,? he said. ?We don't want people to do everything in a day. We want them to come back multiple times, to explore these initial businesses, and explore the historic downtowns across the Headwaters as well. It's a great opportunity to get people to spend more time and more money in each of the communities that Headwaters has, because now, you're not just coming up here for one thing, you have a list, there's so many places to see.?

Thibeault said that the initiative is a true collaboration between townships and businesses. He added that only by pooling resources together to promote the region can they punch above their weight. Most contacts were receptive to the idea, so getting organized didn't pose a large challenge.

?It really wasn't a hard sale to get everyone on board,? he said. ?The idea is to get visitors to come up, go to the wineries, breweries, and cideries, but then also go and explore the downtowns, which is exactly what the businesses and the communities want as well. It's a great journey to follow and win-win for everyone.?

The initiative grew out of a discussion between tourism leaders and local craft producers about how to better link individual businesses with regional destination marketing.

?I was talking with Phil from GoodLot,? Thibeault said. ?We were wondering about what we could do to help (drive up tourism), and he actually proposed that we could start a route for people to take.?

From that conversation, a route-based passport was proposed. One organizer took on the task of rallying producers, while another approached municipalities and business improvement areas for financial support.

?I said, if you can get all the producers, all the different businesses involved, I'll reach out to the communities, the municipalities, the BIAs. Phil went to work, and he got everyone on board from all eight different businesses.?

Participating businesses now include Adamo Estate Winery, Badlands Brewing Company, Caledon Hills Brewing Co., GoodLot Farmstead Brewing Co., Grand Valley Brewery, Mono Centre Brewing, Sonnen Hill Brewing and Spirit Tree Estate Cidery.

With eight producers and several municipalities across the region on board, the program is off to a strong start with plans to review results in the fall and explore expansion for future seasons.