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Multi-lingual Information Plan

Introduction

In many cases, international travelers have a working understanding of English, the second language to most who have the resources to travel abroad. However, a destination that hosts international visitors and shows a little preparedness and willingness to offer basic information, interpretation and services in multiple languages will set them apart from many others.

The development of multi-lingual information strategies will provide the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway with services for visitors from international destinations. Minnesota, particularly the agricultural industry, commonly hosts international groups to share knowledge and technology regarding agricultural sciences and practices. The Minnesota River Valley begins in the Minneapolis/ St. Paul metropolitan area and could very well be an easy-to-reach destination for visiting scientists, business leaders and dignitaries.

This plan provides overall recommendations on how the region can make simple improvements to create foreign-friendly sites, attractions, and businesses. These strategies provide travelers with three important types of services that will make visitors who speak another native language more memorable: information, orientation and interpretation.



Interpretation in other languages will be needed at many sites along the byway.



Current Activities

Members of the Alliance should work closely with the Minnesota Office of Tourism, especially if there are any foreign trade missions planned. Currently, international marketing tactics include targeting:

- Canada,
- Japan,
- United Kingdom,
- Germany, Austria, Switzerland and
- Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Japan is the number one overseas market for the US and Minnesota. With Northwest Airlines offering weekly flights, and a recent trade mission by Minnesota's Governor, there may be new opportunities to target this market, and therefore provide some interpretive translations for this language. The Alliance has a member of the Minnesota Office of Tourism's Regional Office on its board and provides the group with the offices current strategies and any new opportunities for international marketing.

Multi-lingual Information Strategies

Currently, there is little printed bilingual information, orientation and interpretation along the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway. Visitors may have multi-cultural experiences if they attend community festivals that celebrate ethnic roots or at local cafe's, bakeries, or wherever senior citizen may congregate and still speak in their native language.

Action Summary

Action 44: Pursue a series of multi-lingual strategies

The following are low cost strategies that can provide travelers with increased information, orientation, and interpretation in multiple languages.

Information Strategies

1. Work closely with the Minnesota Office of Tourism in Mankato to identify the current international travel trends and opportunities to host international visitation.
2. Provide Byway information for distribution at international trade shows, foreign trade delegations that might be seeking to conduct business with Minnesota, and international media events. There have been many cultural exchanges between Minnesota farmers and researchers conducted at Minnesota's universities and agri-businesses. Advocate for the ability to

In time, increasing numbers of foreign visitors will require a multi-lingual approach to information and interpretation.



share information with international delegations about visitation opportunities.

3. Develop a simple “point” informational sheet with pictures and one or two word descriptions in English, Japanese, German, and Norwegian for use when visitors are asking for information on specific services. These cards can be inexpensive to create. The Minnesota Office of Tourism can assist with translations.
4. Develop a window or door signage program using international flags to designate sites and businesses that have bilingual staff on duty.

Orientation Strategies

1. If a group of international visitors are going to be hosted in the area and along the Byway, provide frontline staff with training to offer the best possible information utilizing simple phrases, maps, and simple sign language.
2. Consider providing maps that include both mileage and travel times between major destinations. Often, foreign visitors do not comprehend travel times.
3. Develop a list of businesses where key travel resources can be purchased, like restaurants, grocery stores, drug stores, retail stores, arts and crafts shops and galleries. Utilize the international travel symbols or simple phrases in multiple languages so foreign visitors can understand and point-out their needs.

Interpretive Strategies

1. Develop simple rack cards or fact sheets for select interpretive sites along the Byway with multiple languages addressed.
2. Develop a simple, two-color driving brochure of the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway in several different languages. You do not have to translate the entire text of existing brochures, just summary paragraphs providing valuable information is necessary.
3. Work with existing cultural exchange students in the schools along the Byway and seek their involvement in translating publications and marketing the Byway to friends, families, and their communities when they return to their native lands.
4. Involve foreign language students at Minnesota State and Gustavus Adolphus colleges to assist with translations.
5. Host international visitors who visit the region on business or trade missions. Work with the Minnesota International Trade Office to host international visitors as a way to promote the Byway and region.



