

The Eastern Townships enjoys a robust 2025 summer season – aided by an ad campaign that went viral!

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Sherbrooke, October 22, 2025 – Surveys among tourism businesses and results from the “Come Hug It Out” campaign, show that the Eastern Townships has enjoyed a highly successful 2025 summer season. The data demonstrate that in spite of the current economic and geopolitical challenges, the region continues to attract visitors from within the province of Quebec and further afield.

Positive results for the tourism industry

A survey conducted among 153 tourism enterprises, covering the period from May 1 to September 30, 2025, indicated that **90% of respondents said they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied”** with the summer season. (The survey covered all sectors of the tourism industry – accommodation, food, attractions and activities.) **Two out of three businesses (66%) said that they had experienced steady visitor traffic**, but the percentage rose even higher when applied specifically to the accommodation and restaurant sectors (73%). Compared with the summer of 2024, more than half of the survey respondents (52%) experienced a rise in visitor traffic, with 30% reporting a significant increase.

Between May and August 2025, the overall **demand for accommodation rose by 3.7%** (compared with the same period in 2024). The demand for hotel accommodation remained stable, but short-term rentals (Airbnb, Vrbo etc.) showed a substantial increase of 13.3%.¹

In light of the fact that tourism conditions were far from ideal, these positive results are particularly welcome. The economy continues to be dogged by inflation and the adverse geopolitical situation between Canada and the United States is making some travellers hesitant to cross the border. As well, in May and June, rainfall was higher than the seasonal average. That too acted as a deterrent. By July however, the situation had reversed. Hot, dry weather provided ideal conditions for outdoor activities.

"Come Hug It Out" : A viral campaign with tangible results

Launched on May 26, 2025, the “Come Hug It Out in the Eastern Townships” summer campaign turned out to be one of the most successful marketing stories in the Eastern Townships! Addressing the tense relationship between Canada and the United States fuelled by economic and diplomatic uncertainties, the goal of the campaign was to reiterate and affectionately state that “our neighbours to the south are always welcome here”.

This heartfelt message resonated far beyond Quebec’s borders. Within a few days, the campaign went viral.

- More than **10 million online views**, as well as thousands of “shares” and positive comments. Even Hollywood star Sharon Stone and famed crime writer Louise Penny weighed in!
- The **international press picked it up** (close to 900 mentions on radio, television, the web and printed media).
- A **massive surge in visitors (+83%) to the English language website** - www.eastertownships.org.

Over and above the symbolism and its emotional impact, the campaign had beneficial economic results. **According to preliminary data from Destination Canada, U.S. visitor spending in the**

Eastern Townships rose by 12.1% between May and August 2025, while it fell by 7.1% for Quebec as a whole (including the Townships).²

“These results confirm the relevance of our promotional efforts aimed at American markets.” says Isabelle Charlebois, General Manager of Tourism Eastern Townships. “Of course, one has to bear in mind that several factors play into these economic results- exchange rates, weather conditions, destination awareness, booking habits and so on - but given that we are currently experiencing a period of global uncertainty, focusing on a strategic campaign with a unifying, human message, has achieved positive results for tourism in our region, both in terms of visitor numbers and tourism spend.”

More than 52% of respondents in the 2025 review of the summer season reported stable or higher visitor traffic from the United States. This market accounts for approximately 6% of annual visitation, generating close to \$73 million of the tourism spend. (American visitors spend more and stay longer than domestic travellers.)

The strategic goal is for the Eastern Townships to remain top of mind among travellers from the Northeastern United States for some time to come. This is where the “Come Hug It Out” campaign shows its true value. It highlights a human, long-term approach that goes beyond simple marketing.

Check out the autumn version: [Come hug it out in the Eastern Townships | Fall](#)



Visitors from here and elsewhere – a study in contrasts

Visitors from within the province of Quebec are the mainstay of summer arrivals in the Eastern Townships. 42% of respondents saw an increase from that source market – a trend that reflects the “boycott” of the United States, with many travellers opting instead to explore their own backyard.

For arrivals from outside Quebec, the picture is more nuanced. A third of tourism businesses were unable to comment on the evolution of these segments, reflecting a sometimes hazy perception of their presence. That said, when an opinion was expressed, the majority mentioned **stability**: for **Ontarians**, for other **Canadians** and for **international visitors**.

The tourism industry continues to face major challenges

In spite of the robust summer season, tourism businesses continue to face a number of difficulties. 46% say that predicting the **flow of tourism traffic** is the main challenge – not least because of the tendency towards **last minute bookings**. This trend, which has grown stronger over the past couple of years, complicates planning and requires industry players to be very flexible.

Operating costs are another challenge. 35% of respondents report having to contend with rising wages and inflation affecting the cost of goods and services.

Labour shortages augment the challenges. This summer, 61% of tourism enterprises reported having difficulties in recruiting qualified staff and/or reorganizing work schedules.

Heading into winter - caution and measured optimism

The outlook for the 2025/2026 winter season is **optimistic**, though hard to predict. Over half of tourism businesses (56%), encouraged by the strong summer results, think that the winter season will also be a good one. Nonetheless, their optimism is tempered by **caution**. 63% say that managing visitor traffic will remain a challenge, as will labour shortages. To bolster the optimistic outlook for the winter season, promotional campaigns, regional collaborations and sustainable tourism initiatives will continue to play a key role.

¹ [Ministère du Tourisme du Québec – Tableau de bord : Enquête sur la fréquentation des établissements d'hébergement](#)

² **Rapports de dépenses alignés sur l'hébergement (LASR – Lodging Aligned Spend Reporting)**
Propulsé par Destination Canada
[Consortium des données touristiques canadiennes](#)

Click here for summer photos of the Eastern Townships

About Tourism Eastern Townships

Tourisme Cantons-de-l'Est (Tourism Eastern Townships) is one of Quebec's 21 regional tourism associations (ATR) and the official representative of Quebec's Ministry of Tourism in the region. Since 1978, TCE's mission has been to foster the region's tourism development, promote, coordinate, support and represent the entire tourism sector, while focusing on the quality of the visitor experience. TCE brings together nearly 600 members representing more than 1,000 tourism offerings throughout the 9 regional county municipalities (MRCs) and in all sectors of the tourism industry: accommodation, restaurants, attractions, activities and events.

The Eastern Townships is the fourth most popular tourist region in Quebec, with volumes reaching 10 million visitors annually, accounting for 6.5 million overnight stays and a tourism spend of more than \$900 million per year. Tourism in the region generates over 20,000 jobs, making it the region's fifth largest employment sector among all tourism regions.

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