Student Gearing up for Tourism Apprenticeship

It may seem an unusual time of year for someone to embark on a research tour to look at tourism in North Atlantic Islands, but it suits the purposes of Laura Hagen. The graduate student from Prince Edward Island, who has been selected for a 1996-97 Apprenticeship position in the North Atlantic Islands Programme at the Institute of Island Studies, is intent on studying the whole issue of off-season tourism. Her research has convinced her that there is something to be learned from how other islands have approached seasonality in their tourism planning.

"Seasonality has always been a hurdle that Island tourism operators have had to cope with. It isn't so different in other cold water islands," says Hagen."Although tourist operators in islands such as Iceland, Isle of Man, the Aland Islands, Greenland, Newfoundland and the Faroe islands also enjoy very active short summer seasons, they too are captive to the hazards of weather, and therefore find it difficult to offer long-term employment in their sector.

Laura is looking, not only at niches where the Prince Edward Island tourism industry can find a foothold in the off-season, but at ways in which the Island community can work towards developing this sector in a harmonious manner. She feels that tourism must reflect or enhance the lifestyles of Islanders, and that any further development must have the full private and public support of the population if it is to be successful.

All of the talk about research is, of course, secondary at the moment. The PEI student is now working out her itinerary, and deciding what to bring with her on the first leg of her journey, and what to pack for shipping later. She has a quite varied schedule, which includes studying in Scotland until January, spending the late winter and spring months working in the Aland Islands and the Isle of Man, and carrying out research on the other islands involved in the project.

This is a natural progression in her career. A graduate of the University of Prince Edward Island with a Bachelor of Business Administration, Laura has spent the last six summers working in the tourism industry on Prince Edward Island. She expects that her experience over the next year will give her insights that she can use to promote an integrated approach to off-season tourism on the Island.

This is where the people of Prince Edward Island are the big winners. By encouraging future business leaders to expand their expertise and business knowledge, and by asking that the apprentices return to their home province and apply their newly-honed skills in the local economy for the next three years, the provincial government is investing in the economy of the future.

If anyone is interested in learning more about the Apprenticeship Programme, he/she can contact the Institute of Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island (902)566-0956.

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