

# Cultivating Tourism in St. Jacobs Country



*The Farmers' Market is a hub of activity for this rural community. Over 500 vendors style of commerce that attracts country and city folk alike.*



*by Joanne Rennie*

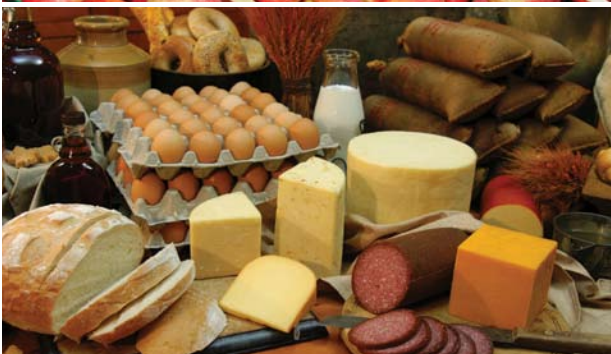


St. Jacobs Country is located in a fertile agricultural area of Southwestern Ontario just 1.25 hours west of Toronto. Along with abundant crops, a rich cultural heritage and thriving tourism industry grow here, permitting visitors an encounter with something uncommon in today's fast paced world – horse and buggy traffic!

Nestled close to Kitchener-Waterloo and Stratford, St. Jacobs is home to a religious denomination known as "Old Order Mennonites." Unconcerned with the price of a litre of gas, horse and buggy is their transportation of

choice. These gentle, quiet people go about their lives observing traditions that shun fashion and modern conveniences. A drive along the rural routes of Waterloo County will take you by 'Old Order' farms where life goes on much as it has for the last 100 years. Signs at the end of lanes invite you to purchase brown eggs, fresh vegetables, maple syrup, summer sausage, and handmade quilts – products of these industrious households. Often times, the treats and treasures from the farm will be offered for sale from the back of a buggy at the St. Jacobs Farmers' Market.

The Farmers' Market is a hub of activity for this rural community. Over 500 vendors participate in a neighbourly style of commerce that attracts country and city folk alike. Indoor and outdoor booths sell everything imaginable! There is often live musical entertainment and special events are planned throughout the year. (*Thursday and Saturday all year from 7 am to 3:30 pm; Tuesday Summer Market June 17 to August 26, 2008 from 8 am to 3 pm; Sunday Market March 9 until December 28, 2008 from 10 am to 4 pm*)

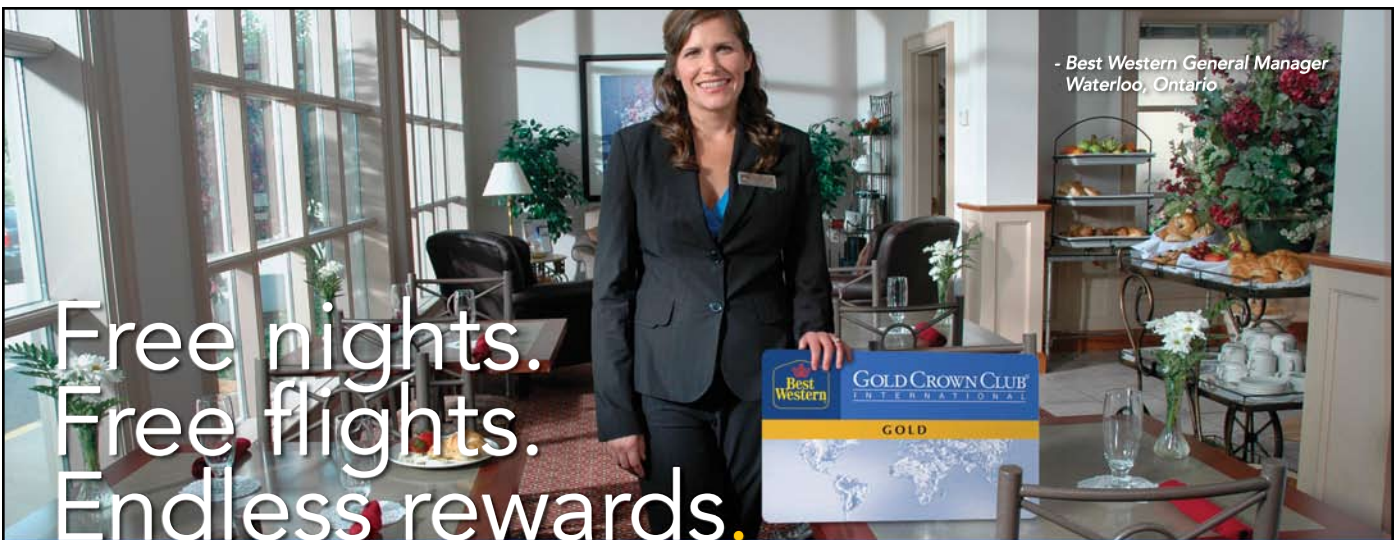


On Market days you might like to experience a horse-drawn trolley tour to a Mennonite farm or ride the rails from the City of Waterloo with the Waterloo Central Railway. *(Seasonal hours)*

Next door to the Markets is the St. Jacobs Outlet Mall – the first mall of its kind in Canada and a wonderful place to find even more bargains! *(Open daily, weeknights until 9pm)*

The Village of St. Jacobs peacefully co-exists with the rural simplicity of the Old Order Mennonites. A study in contrast, the Village maintains much of its charming nostalgic character but has become renowned as a shopper's paradise for its fashionable boutiques, galleries, antique shops and working craft studios. Pause at noon and at 6 p.m. to listen as the Village carillons toll. Stroll along King Street and visit the broom maker in the old blacksmith's shop and the chocolate shop where you can see the candy maker practice his craft. The Mill, a local heritage landmark is now home to five levels of fascinating shops and exhibits including: the Model Train Exhibit, the Maple Syrup Museum, St. Jacobs Quilt Gallery, History of Electricity Exhibit and a Retrospective of Home Hardware (this business success story began in St. Jacobs). You can satisfy your curiosity for the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle by visiting the newly refurbished

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“Telling The Mennonite Story” at the Visitor Centre next to the Post Office in the Village. This facility provides a multi-media presentation explaining the history, faith and culture of the Mennonite people.

When you have worked up an appetite, indulge yourself at one of the fine local dining establishments conveniently located in the heart of the Village. Benjamin’s Restaurant & Inn is a refurbished stagecoach inn that has served guests at this location for over 150 years. Contemporary cuisine and a relaxed atmosphere make it a favourite stop in the Village (patio in season). The Stone Crock Restaurant specializes in buffet dining and has a hearty a la carte menu too. Be sure to save some room for a slice of their famous pie or an apple dumpling! Too full to eat another bite? Take home local taste treats from the Stone Crock Bakery and Stone Crock Meats & Cheese.

Professional theatre, music performances and special events occur in St. Jacobs Country and surrounding area year ‘round. Plan to attend the St. Jacobs & Region-Wide Quilt Shows held annually in May. Check [www.stjacobs.com](http://www.stjacobs.com) for details.

Stay for more than a day! Best Western St. Jacobs Country Inn and Destination Inn & Suites are conveniently located close to St. Jacobs Country attractions and offer special getaway packages. Bed and Breakfast accommodations are available in the Village of St. Jacobs and surrounding area.

St. Jacobs Country is an uncommon place. From the rattle of buggy wheels to the whistle of a model steam train, there are many moments to cherish that will not soon be forgotten.



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