

# KENTUCKY- EH!

## Presenters

**Karly Melo,**  
Marketing and Public  
Relations Director  
Reach Global Marketing

**Chenelle Mcgee**  
International & Domestic  
Sales Director  
Kentucky Department of  
Tourism

Down but definitely not out!



## Canada is Kentucky's #1 International Market

Canadian visitors consistently rank as Kentucky's top international source market, delivering higher per-trip spending than domestic travelers.

**29.1 million Canadian residents returned from the U.S. in 2025**

**Canadians set to spend record \$47.6 billion on vacations in 2026**



## Exchange Rate Pressure

The CAD/USD exchange rate creates significant cost barriers. Economic uncertainty compounds travel budget concerns.

## Geopolitical Tensions

Trade tensions fuel "Buy Canadian" sentiment. National pride redirects travel spending to domestic or European options.

## Border Hesitation

Crossing concerns and competition from other destinations create friction. Some travelers avoid US trips entirely.

# THE CANADIAN TRAVELER

41.5 Million

**People**

## Provinces

Ontario, Québec, British Columbia, & Alberta

## Who CAN travel?

67% of all Canadians hold a valid passport

## Demographics

15% children (0–14)  
65% working-age (15–64)  
20% seniors (65+)

## Trip Length

3–5 Nights  
Short-stay getaway market  
Long weekend focused

## Average Spend

\$1,312 for overnight trips





## 1 Bourbon Trail

The #1 draw for Canadian visitors. Authentic distillery experiences, tastings, and tours offer something uniquely Kentucky that cannot be replicated at home.

## 2 Horse Culture & Derby

The Kentucky Derby and year-round horse farm tours provide iconic experiences. Canadians seek the authentic thoroughbred culture and racing heritage.

## 3 Outdoors & Value

Daniel Boone country, hiking, and natural beauty appeal to outdoor enthusiasts.



## 1 Glowmads

36% of Gen Z are planning to seek out beauty treatments and skincare stores while travelling in 2026

## 2 Shelf Discovery

58% of Canadian travellers always or often visit local supermarkets abroad.

## 3 Altitude Shift

74% of travellers are considering or planning a mountain escape for summer or autumn 2026.

## 4 Family Miles

34% of Gen Z adults cite saving money or sharing travel costs as their core motivation for travelling with family.

## 5 Catching Flights and Feelings

50% of travellers have gone, or considered going, overseas specifically to meet new people

## 6 Bookbound

48% of travellers have booked, or would consider, a trip inspired by literature.



1

## Traditional Media & Influencers

Instagram and TikTok drive discovery and direct bookings. Traditional media is still a trusted source.

2

## Word of Mouth

"Canadians trust other Canadians" — peer recommendations and user-generated content are highly influential.

3

## Trade & Quebec

Travel trade serves group packages for older demographics. Quebec market requires French-language content exclusively.





# umm... NO

## **Don't Treat Canadians Like Americans**

Canadians notice when treated as interchangeable with Americans. Avoid ignoring the political climate and cultural sensitivities. One-size-fits-all messaging alienates this sophisticated audience.

## **Don't Go Dark on the Market**

The biggest mistake is going silent during downturns. Brands that disappear now become invisible when sentiment rebounds. Maintain presence to capture share upon recovery.

## **Don't Skip on French Canadians**

The French Canadian segment is culturally distinct and consumes French-language content exclusively. Skipping this market leaves significant opportunity untapped.



1

## Media & Travel Shows

Invest in Canadian media relationships. Maintain presence at major Canadian travel shows.

2

## Canada-Specific Content

Develop Canada-specific itineraries. Create French Canadian content to unlock underserved market.

3

## Regional Partnerships

Partner with Southern states for Deep South drive routes and co-op marketing opportunities.



## Value-Driven Decision Making

- Canadians are highly price-sensitive, with USD/CAD exchange rates shaping destination choice
- Strong opportunity to position Kentucky as a “more for your money” U.S. destination
- Emphasize affordable experiences vs major gateway cities



## Shift Toward Short & Accessible Trips

- Growth in 3–5 night getaways and regional travel over long-haul vacations
- Preference for low-friction trips (drive markets, short flights, easy itineraries)
- Kentucky fits well for quick, multi-experience escapes



## High-Impact Kentucky Experiences

- Strong experiential appeal: bourbon trail, horse country, outdoor recreation, music & food culture
- Authentic, less crowded alternative to traditional U.S. destinations
- Works well for couples, groups, and experience-led travellers

## High-Intent Traveller Targeting

- Prioritize segments seeking food & drink, outdoor adventure, and weekend city breaks
- Lean into “ready-to-book” travellers looking for easy decision-making and strong value proposition



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## Protect Your #1 Market

Canada remains Kentucky's top international market. The relationship is proven, resilient, and worth defending through current headwinds.



## Invest for the Rebound

Position now for future sentiment turnaround. Brands that stay visible through downturns capture share on recovery. Down but not out.

## Know Your Audience

Identify who is still traveling and speak directly to them. High-intent, experience-motivated Canadians are actively choosing Kentucky.

**We Welcome Your  
Questions**

# Q&A + RESOURCES

## **Contacts**

Karly Melo, Marketing and Public  
Relations Director  
[karly@reachglobal.ca](mailto:karly@reachglobal.ca)

Chenelle Mcgee  
International & Domestic Sales Director  
Kentucky Department of Tourism  
[chenelle.mcgee@ky.gov](mailto:chenelle.mcgee@ky.gov)

