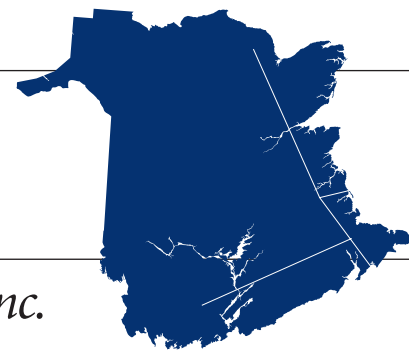


New Brunswick Profile



New Brunswick Profile: Bruce Smith, owner/operator of Seascope Kayak Tours, Inc.

■ By Robert Bay

Bruce Smith is the owner and operator of Seascope Kayak Tours, Inc., based out of Deer Island, NB. He founded the company in 1994 to offer kayaking expeditions in the Bay of Fundy and in Newfoundland during the summer months, and in 1995 founded Seascope Del Sur in Costa Rica to act as a southern base for the company during the winter months. eNBUSINESS talked to Smith in August to learn about his unique approach to New Brunswick's tourism market.

eNBUSINESS: *How's the tourism season shaping up?*

Bruce Smith: Even with all the dire predictions of tourism being adversely affected by fuel prices and other economic factors coming into the season, not to mention a fair share of foggy weather, I'm extremely happy with how the summer has gone. We've had a good mix of clients coming from New Brunswick and the surrounding provinces and territories, as well as from the U.S. and Europe.

eNBUSINESS: *When you started Seascope Kayak Tours, adventure tourism was a new idea. What were the major challenges you had to overcome? What central character traits helped you overcome those challenges?*

Bruce Smith: Probably the biggest challenge I had to overcome at the beginning was convincing lending institutions that the idea of an adventure tour company focused on interpretive kayak tours would be lucrative and sustainable. Believing in the concept and my abilities allowed me to present and sell the vision effectively and I was fortunate to find the support to start the business from the Charlotte County Business Development Center.

eNBUSINESS: *What role does adventure tourism play now in New Brunswick's tourism industry? How do you see that role evolving in the future?*

Bruce Smith: Adventure tourism in its most broad definition includes both 'hard' or technical sports activities and 'soft' adventure, in which there is no particular skill or prior knowledge about the activity required of the participants. New Brunswick's natural resources are conducive to both ends of the spectrum, so adventure tourism has incredible potential to play a pivotal role in the larger tourism industry. But in order to continue to grow this market, we need to ensure that the adventure tourism operators now in existence offer consistently high quality product. The Bay of Fundy, for example, is a world-class destination; but it will only draw more people to the region if the adventure product offered maintains consistent high quality on the world stage.

eNBUSINESS: *Seascope has been recognized for its sustainable tourism practices. How do you see environmental responsibility evolving in the business community of New Brunswick? What business opportunities exist in environmental sustainability?*

Bruce Smith: The province has yet to embrace sustainable tourism and is only just beginning to consider environmental responsibility. Sustainable tourism is attracting a lot of attention in the media and is currently the leading edge of the travel industry. If New Brunswick wants to continue to attract visitors on a global scale, it needs to fully incorporate sustainable tourism practices and environmental responsibility across all business sectors. Because Seascope has been focused on sustainability since its inception, nearly 15 years ago, and has been recognized for this on the international stage, we are in an excellent position – and quite willing – to be a mentor to other tourism entities and a model that other adventure tourism businesses can emulate. We have just revamped our web site, www.seascopekayaktours.com and invite others to visit our sustainability page for ideas to assist in making your organization more sustainable and responsibly focused.

eNBUSINESS: *Why have you focused on outdoor recreation as a motivation for your career?*



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"Our province has a great deal to learn from other countries with respect to offering true ecotourism. . . . Only when more people realize the value of what they have in this province will change begin to take place."

Bruce Smith: Kayak tours, because they allow people to be so intimate with the marine environment around them, are an excellent way to teach people of all ages the importance of respecting the oceans, the earth and its non-human inhabitants. Such connections with nature are the vehicle through which I experience spirituality, and when I can share those connections with others, I feel I am making an important contribution to their lives and to the world around us.

eNBUSINESS: *You spend the summer months leading tours in New Brunswick, and the winter months doing the same in Costa Rica, and have been an educator and consultant in the United States and Mexico. How does that international experience affect your view of the business culture of New Brunswick?*

Bruce Smith: My international experiences make me acutely aware that, here in New Brunswick, we are way, way behind. Our province has a great deal to learn from other countries with respect to offering true ecotourism. For example, in many other countries, interpretation is a much higher priority in tourism development. Protection is another key element that desperately needs attention here. In Costa Rica, the national parks system preserves 27 percent of land mass in protected areas and national parks. The Bay of Fundy and West Isles Archipelago – a marine environment every bit as diverse as a rainforest ecosystem – is crying out for such protection. Only when more people realize the value of what they have in this province will change begin to take place.

eNBUSINESS: *What special challenges does your seasonal approach pose? What advantages does it provide you?*

Bruce Smith: For Seascope, the logistics of alternating between two hubs of operation poses challenges, but after more than a decade of operating in both countries, a workable equilibrium has been reached. One of the biggest advantages of having product not just on Deer Island, but also in Newfoundland and in Central America, is that when clients enjoy going out with us in the Bay of Fundy, they often decide to join us in one of the other locations for a subsequent trip. Offering this diversity of experiences provides the repeat customer with lots of choices.

eNBUSINESS: *You also devote a lot of time to teaching. Do you view yourself first as an educator, or a businessperson? What skills are common to both?*

Bruce Smith: I see myself as an educator first, and a businessperson second. When it comes to work, I consistently put people first, and that is part of what makes me a dedicated guide and teacher.

eNBUSINESS: *How have you customized the sales/consumer relationship to work better for your customers? What has been the result?*

Bruce Smith: One of the things we do best at Seascope is what I call a personalized, full-service continuum. When someone looks at our web site or calls to book a trip, we provide a helpful, friendly approach from that point all the way until they are leaving our base after a fantastic kayak experience. We like to make the customer's experience seamless and enriching; for this reason, many of our clients come back again and again. One, in particular, said, "When I paddle with Seascope, it's like paddling with a group of friends."

eNBUSINESS: *What type of industries/groups come to you for kayaking tours? What advantages would companies gain through a Seascope tour?*

Bruce Smith: We get a lot of convention travel through high-end accommodations such as the Fairmont Algonquin in St. Andrews. New Brunswick corporations bring their office staffs for day trips in which successes are celebrated and team building emphasized. Sharing a natural experience together in a diverse ocean environment can be quite an eye-opening exercise for companies.

eNBUSINESS: *What key piece of advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs?*

Bruce Smith: Pick a business that you're really, really passionate about and the rewards will always give you more and more energy keep improving on your successes.