



# The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To:	Community Growth and Economic Development Committee
From:	Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development
Report:	#2025-EDT-9
Date:	May 6, 2025

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**Subject:**

2024/2025 Out of Office Tourism Marketing Campaign

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**Recommendation:**

That the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee recommends:

That this report be received for information.

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee a brief overview of the Region's Economic Development and Tourism Division 2024/2025 tourism marketing campaign, titled '*Out of Office*'.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The '*Out of Office*' (OOO) promotional campaign was launched as Durham Tourism's high summer 2024 campaign. It encouraged people to book a day for themselves to get out and enjoy a daytrip to one of Durham's most popular tourism destinations such as Parkwood Estates National Historic Site, Thermea Spa Village, and the Waterfront Trail, with supplementary suggestions for many other incredible activities around the Region.

- 2.2 The target audience for the OOO campaign was working professionals from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area that are looking for day dates and nights. Ages for this group include the segment of 25 to 34 year-olds without children, and 55+ year-olds with adult or no children. These segments seek out experiences and enjoy concerts, theatre, culinary, and outdoor sports. These segments align with desired key marketing audiences as outlined in the [2024-2028 Durham Tourism Strategic Action Plan](#).
- 2.3 The OOO campaigns were created, developed and designed by Division staff. Related activities and materials included social media programming, creating e-newsletter lists, and deploying communications strategies across a beautiful and compelling campaign.
- 2.4 As a way of engaging the audience, Durham Tourism used an online meeting booking tool that allows potential visitors to “book a meeting with Durham Tourism”. The outcome of the audience clicking on the ‘book a meeting’ button resulted in a calendar invitation being sent to that person, which would block the participant’s actual digital calendar for the day. The calendar appointment contained an itinerary. The itinerary includes what to do, places to eat, and where to sleep, including links and helpful information about each destination.
- 2.5 Participants in the campaign also received an invitation to join the Durham Tourism e-newsletter, which is a further step of continued engagement.

### **3. Summer 2024 Campaign Details**

- 3.1 The summer 2024 OOO campaign was very successful with 1.4 million impressions and 10,000 landing page views.
- 3.2 The Summer OOO campaign included:
- a. Advertisement on the inside front cover of Canada Travel Magazine (July 2024 issue), which is distributed to subscribers of the Globe and Mail
  - b. A week-long billboard ad in Toronto along the Gardiner Expressway, eastbound at Exhibition
  - c. Ads on Spotify, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram
  - d. Organic content on LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram;
  - e. An Instagram contest
  - f. Features in July and August’s visitor and industry e-newsletter
  - g. Landing page on Durham Tourism website with suggested itineraries

### 3.3 The Summer OOO campaign achieved the following results:

- a. 1,418,111 impressions
- b. 10,024 landing page views
- c. 8,680 clicks (0.65% click through rate)
- d. 255 itineraries emailed out
- e. 149 new e-news subscribers

### 3.4 Building on the success of the summer 2024 campaign, in late 2024, Durham Tourism applied for and was granted \$5,000 through Central Counties Tourism Partnership Out-of-Region Marketing funding to run the OOO campaign in Winter 2025.

## 4. Winter 2025 OOO Campaign Details

### 4.1 Building upon learnings and success with the summer OOO campaign, staff determined they could further optimize results. Staff contacted Thermea Spa Village marketing staff and created a partnership to hire popular Instagram influencer @WellnessTravelled to host a giveaway on their account. This contest generated significant high-quality engagement as well as strong reach to their audience.

### 4.2 The Winter OOO campaign included:

- a. Advertisement on the inside front cover of Canada Travel Magazine (March 2025 issue), which is distributed to subscribers of the Globe and Mail
- b. 2 week-long billboard ads in Toronto along the Gardiner Expressway eastbound at Exhibition and 401 eastbound at 427
- c. Ads on Spotify, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram
- d. Organic content posted to LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram
- e. Contest collaboration with influencer @WellnessTravelled
- f. Contest and promotion to attendees of the Central Counties Tourism 2025 Symposium in Vaughan
- g. Features in January and February's visitor e-newsletter
- h. Landing page on Durham Tourism website with suggested itineraries.

### 4.3 The Winter OOO campaign achieved the following results:

- a. 762,331 impressions
- b. 3,608 landing page views
- c. 25,481 clicks (4.38% click through rate)
- d. 1,270 itineraries emailed out (up 498% over summer 2024 campaign)

- e. 663 new e-news subscribers (up 445% over summer 2024 campaign)
- 4.4 While the winter campaign resulted in fewer landing page views than the summer edition, the deeper engagements, along with drastically increased emailed itineraries and e-newsletter sign-ups, indicated an optimized approach to how the campaign functioned and created longer-term engagement with potential visitors.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The total cost of the two OOO campaigns was \$22,978.99. The summer campaign was fully covered by the approved 2024 Economic Development and Tourism program budget, while for the winter edition, \$6,821.96 was sourced from the approved 2025 Economic Development and Tourism program budget and \$5,000 was sourced from the partnership with Central Counties Tourism.

## **6. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

- 6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following Strategic Direction(s) and Pathway(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:
- a. Connected and Vibrant Communities
    - C6. Continue to revitalize and transform downtowns into hubs of economic, social, and cultural connection.
  - b. Resilient Local Economies
    - R2. Support the growth of new business startups and small to medium local businesses.
    - R5. Cultivate and promote local arts, culture, quality of place, and tourism that embrace urban excitement and country charm.
  - c. Strong Relationships
    - S4. Advocate to the federal and provincial government and agencies to advance regional priorities.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 The Durham Tourism Out of Office campaigns used a combination of digital media and traditional advertising to reach a specific and targeted audience of potential visitors, promote daytrip and overnight experiences, and built broad awareness of Durham's tourism offering.
- 7.2 Economic Development and Tourism Division staff will continue to collaborate with various partners to drive engagement and encourage tourism to Durham Region.

## **8. Attachments**

Attachment #1: Out of Office Campaign marketing materials.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, PLE  
Commissioner of Community Growth and  
Economic Development

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer

# Out of Office Landing Page

## OUT OF OFFICE

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 REMINDER

### Set your Out of Office.

Choose an itinerary and book a "very important meeting" with Durham Tourism using the links below. When you do, we'll email you helpful guide to plan your day Out of Office.



#### Put the "OOO" in Out of Office at a Nordic spa village

Unplug and unwind by checking into Whitby's **Thermēa Spa Village**. Enter a world where the deadlines and expense reports on your to do list are replaced by visits to the sauna, refreshing cold plunges, and relaxing by the fire. Indulge in farm-to-fork fare at an on-site restaurant. We recommend booking your visit to Thermēa in advance.

Get our itinerary recommendations and block off a day for visiting the spa now.

[Add Thermēa to your calendar](#)



#### Take it offline for the day and take in some art IRL

Don't let their email find you. The only thing you'll need your phone for is selfies in that just-right museum lighting. Wander through **The Robert McLaughlin Gallery** and take in the thoughtfully curated exhibitions and beautiful architecture. Afterwards, put a pin in all your responsibilities and cozy up at a local cafe or cocktail bar.

Get our itinerary recommendations and block off a day for getting cozy and cultured now.

[Add The RMG to your calendar](#)



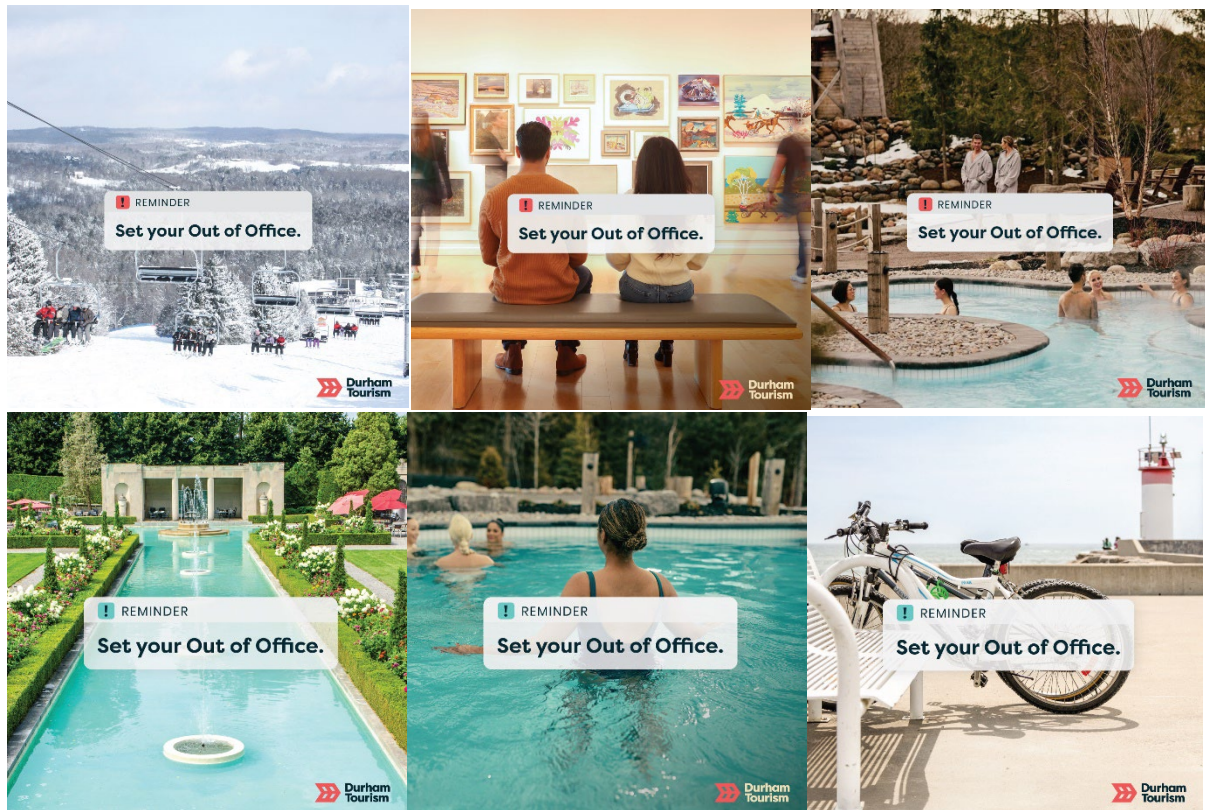
#### This meeting could have been a morning on the slopes

Spend your day carving up the slopes at **Brimacombe** and circle back on that meeting you missed tomorrow. Leave your phone behind in the chalet and enjoy the fresh air and the views from the ski lift. After a day outside, get warmed up at local pub **Walsh's Snug** for some après ski vibes and Irish pub classics.

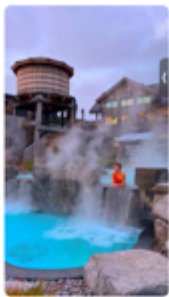
Get our itinerary recommendations and block off a day for skiing or snowboarding now.

[Add Brimacombe to your calendar](#)

## Social Media Posts



@WellnessTravelled Giveaway Reel



CLOSED ❌ ✨ G I V E A W A Y ✨ Spa day for 2 at...  
February 19 - Duration 0:28

4.6K 16K 3.1K 693

Overview ⓘ

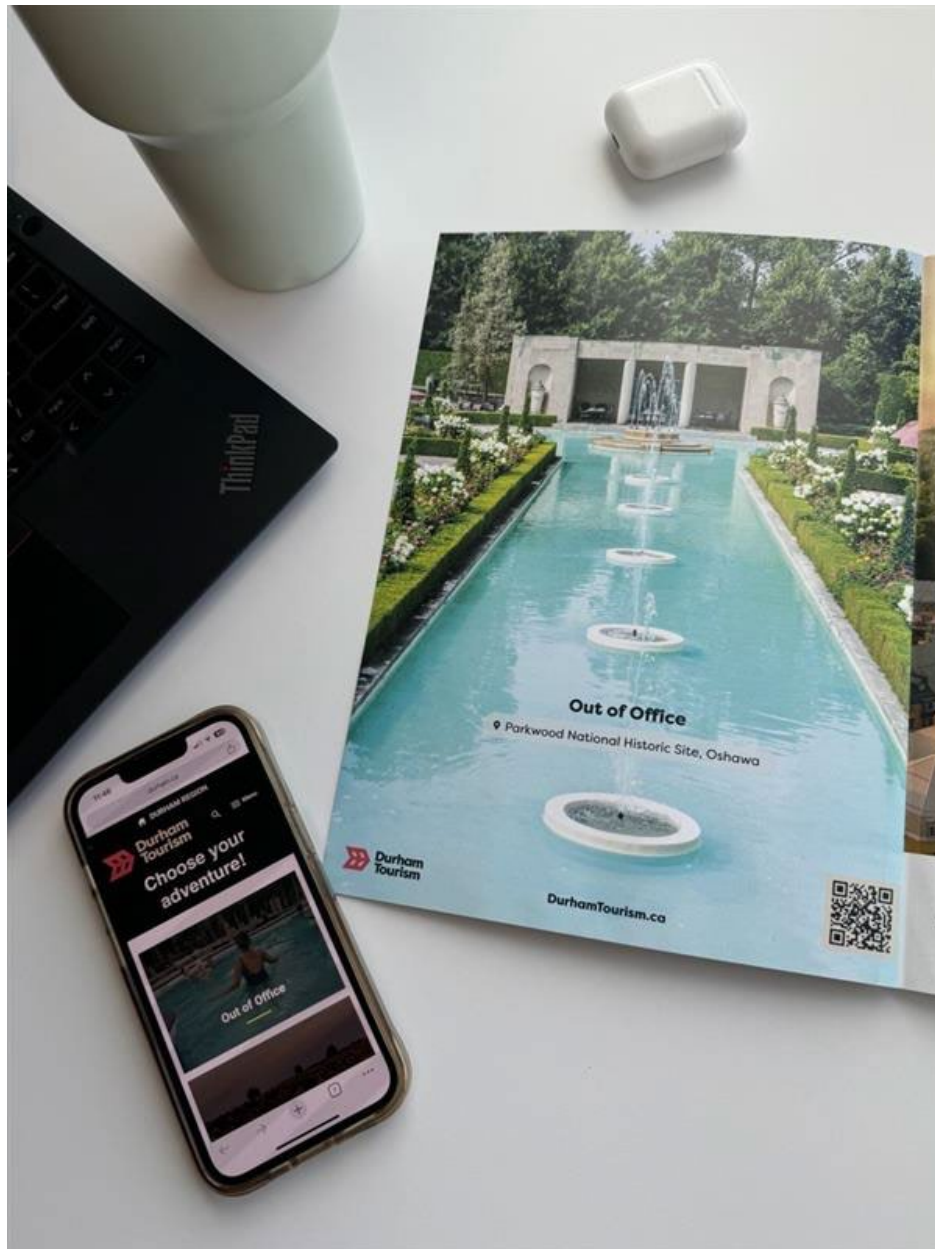
Views	280,399
Watch time	13d 22h 39m 13s
Interactions	24,391




## Billboard



## Canada Travel Magazine Ad



# Sample Itinerary Email


 Thermëa Spa Village Itinerary



Durham Tourism <notifications@calendly.com>

To  Chelsea Lawrence

Retention Policy 7 Year Delete (7 years)

 You forwarded this message on 2025-01-20 2:46 PM.




 Reply


 Reply


Expires 2032-01-21




Do you really have a meeting booked at Thermëa Spa Village? No. Should you book a day and go? Yes. [Book your spot at Thermëa](#) and unplug for the day. Here is your suggested itinerary:

 **Morning:** Start your day off by enjoying a leisurely coffee at one of downtown Whitby's many coffee shops. Whether you stop in at [Brock Street Espresso](#), [Jacked Up Coffee](#), or [The Souk](#) (closed Mondays) you'll be delighted with every sip.

 **All Day:** Check in to [Thermëa Spa Village](#) and check out of your regular daily routine. Instead, embrace the thermal cycle that encourages spa guests to rotate between the warmth of the saunas and steam rooms, the cold of the plunge pools, and rest in the baths or cozy chairs. Spa treatments and add-ons are available to book if you'd like to take your relaxation to another level. When hunger strikes, visit one of three on-site restaurants, all of which offer menus that perfectly balance indulgence and health.

 **Night:** End your day by tucking into bed at the [Residence Inn Whitby](#). If you haven't gotten your fill of water-based relaxation, you can take advantage of the indoor pool and whirlpool. Enjoy a free hot breakfast in the morning.

[Directions on Google Maps](#)

 Don't forget to show us your OOO day and tag [@DurhamTourism](#) on Instagram.