



Kawartha Summer Cruise



Kawartha Summer Cruise

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Kawartha Summer Cruise

Introduction



Here are photos from a 5-day cruise on a unique waterway connecting lakes and rivers in scenic central Ontario.

Some 11,000 years ago central Ontario started to emerge from the Ice Age's last retreating glaciers. Nature's processes of freezing and thawing, wrenching and resting, carved out the Trent and Severn watersheds. The Kawartha region is too rugged for agriculture, but the natural beauty of its lakes and forests is unique.

The Trent-Severn Waterway connects together some of the major lakes and rivers of the region to connect Lake Ontario to Lake Huron, bypassing Niagara Falls and Lake Erie.



Construction of what is now a 386 km (240 mile) canal system began in 1833 with the construction of a single lock in the middle of the Kawartha Lakes. The system evolved in fits and starts over the decades, depending on currents in local, provincial, and federal politics.

Although originally intended for commercial purposes, by the time it was completed in 1920 railways and larger boats made it largely obsolete.

But the Trent-Severn waterway has been a boon for tourism, and the 44 locks which link lakes and rivers across central Ontario are now used by a wide variety of recreational boaters ... and this mini cruise.

Trent-Severn Waterway



	Kawartha Summer Cruise Route Peterborough to Big Chute	23 locks
	Other parts of the Waterway	21 locks





Day 1
Departure

**We pull away from the dock in Peterborough promptly at 7 a.m.
The canal locks are first-come first served, and we want to be in line early.**



Departure

**The crew tops up the fuel at a local gas bar
and then we're on our way.**



Ashburnham

**Our first locks are within the city of Peterborough.
This is Ashburnham, Lock 20.**



Ashburnham First Mate John checks our clearance as we enter the lock.



Ashburnham

A pleasant sign of things to come. Parks Canada does an incredible job.
You won't have to look at pictures of all 23 signs, just some of them.



Ashburnham

Ashburnham is one of the old locks that's operated entirely manually, mostly by girls working summer jobs.



Ashburnham For the first part of our trip we will need to be lifted as we go upstream.



Ashburnham

Looking back once we're up and exiting the lock we can see our smiling friend closing the lock gate behind us at the left.



**Otonabee
River**

**This CPR rail swing bridge was built in 1898, and is one of
four remaining railway truss bridges over the waterway.**



Otonabee
River

This is the view from the bow deck of the *Kawartha Voyageur*.
This folds up against the front of the ship to fit in short locks.



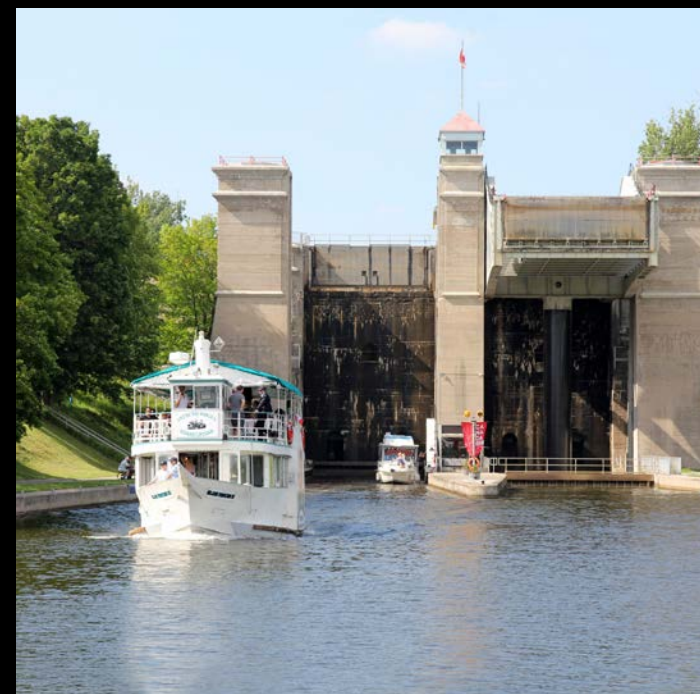
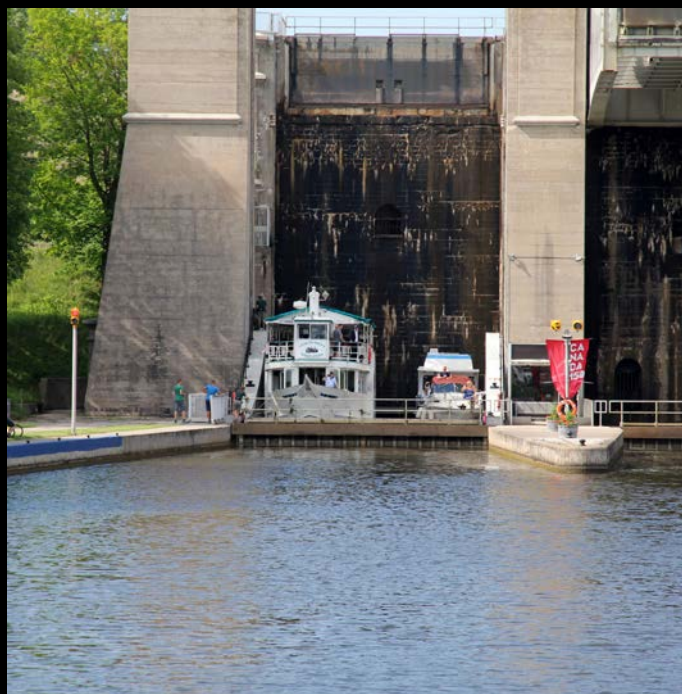
**Peterborough
Lift Lock**

Our next lock, the Peterborough Lift Lock, is the highest hydraulic lift lock in the world, raising or lowering boats 65 feet / 20 metres.



**Peterborough
Lift Lock**

I'll be riding through on the *Voyageur* so I visited yesterday to get the picture sequence on the next page.



**Peterborough
Lift Lock**

**There are two boat chambers supported on interconnected hydraulic rams.
Gravity uses the weight of the upper chamber to push the other up as it descends.**



**Peterborough
Lift Lock**

After we enter the lower chamber the gate behind us folds up to seal us in for the ride up.



**Peterborough
Lift Lock**

This massive structure stands almost unchanged since its construction between 1896 and 1904.



**Peterborough
Lift Lock**

**The other chamber passes us on its way down.
No pumps. Just gravity.**



**Peterborough
Lift Lock**

The lock staff put a bit more water in the upper chamber to initiate the displacement process.



Peterborough **Nearing the top**
Lift Lock



Peterborough Waiting for the front gate to be lowered ...
Lift Lock



Peterborough
Lift Lock

... so that we can be on our way.
Thanks for the lift.



**Otonabee
River**

**The Warsaw Road swing bridge makes way
for us as we head up the Otonabee River.**



**Trent
University**

**We sail through the middle of Trent University
in the northern outskirts of Peterborough.**



**Trent
University**

**The Bata Library, the academic heart of the university,
is undergoing a major revitalization.**



**Trent
University**

The campus occupies both sides of the Otonabee river ...



**Trent
University**

... connected primarily by a pedestrian bridge.



**Trent
University**

**Champlain College has been the recipient of
many international awards for architecture.**



Otonabee Locks

The next section of the waterway contains five locks in a stretch of just six miles.



**Otonabee
Locks**

Construction of these manually-operated locks began in 1896.



Otonabee Locks

These locks are paired with dams. The dams create the differences in the water levels. The locks allow boats to bypass the dams.



Lock 22 — Nassau Mills



Lock 23 — Otonabee



Lock 24 — Douro



Lock 25 — Sawyer Creek



Lock 26 — Lakefield



Lock 27 — Young's Point



**Otonabee
River**

**Lock 23, Otonabee.
Some of the dams have associated hydro-electric generating stations.**



**Otonabee
River**

We're still far enough south for there to be some agriculture ...



Otonabee
River

... and for homes to have lawns.



Otonabee
River

Lock 24, Douro



Otonabee
River



Otonabee
River



Otonabee
River

Nearing Lakefield



Clear Lake

**When a speed boat isn't fast enough
it's nice to have your own sea plane.**



Clear Lake

Summer cottage



Clear Lake

Summer cottage



Clear Lake

Summer cottage



Clear Lake

Traditional summer cottage



Clear Lake



Stony Lake

Smaller summer cottage



Stony Lake

St. Peter's on-the-Rock, established in 1914, is a popular Anglican church accessible only by boat.



Burleigh Falls



Lovesick

Lock 30, accessible only by boat



Buckhorn

Lower Buckhorn Lake



Buckhorn

Closing in on tonight's dockage.



Buckhorn

Home sweet home, for tonight.



Day 2

Buckhorn Lake



Bobcaygeon

**Bobcaygeon is a booming tourist centre of 3,000.
The first Trent-Severn lock was built here in 1833.**



Bobcaygeon

The name *Bobcaygeon* is an English corruption of the Aboriginal corruption of Samuel de Champlain's 1615 French description of the area as "beau bocage".



Sturgeon
Lake



**Sturgeon
Lake**



Fenelon Falls



Fenelon Falls Fenelon Falls, permanent population 1,800, is the other major tourist town in the Kawartha Lakes region.



Fenelon Falls We're a tourist attraction here in Lock 34 in the middle of Fenelon Falls.



Fenelon Falls The lock is opposite what has become Fenelon Falls' very busy restaurant row.



**Cameron
Lake**

One of the very few sailboats we've seen.



Rosedale

Lock 35. Closing in on tonight's dockage.



Balsam Lake

This is the summit of the Trent-Severn Waterway, and the highest point in North America that a boat can reach from sea level.



**Kirkfield
Channel**

**We are now travelling downstream, and will
need the locks to lower rather than lift us.**



**Kirkfield
Channel**

This man-made canal, about 6 miles long, cuts into the 2 billion year-old rock of the Canadian Shield. No topsoil here.



**Kirkfield
Lift Lock**

**Kirkfield is the other lift lock in the system.
It was completed in 1907, three years after Peterborough.**



**Kirkfield
Lift Lock**

**This lock lowers or raises boats 49 feet / 15 metres.
The lifting structures here are steel rather than concrete.**



Kirkfield
Lift Lock

We had a chance to walk ahead to watch the
Kawartha Voyageur pass through the lock.



**Kirkfield
Lift Lock**

**The principle of operation is exactly the same as in Peterborough.
The descending chamber holding the *Voyageur* pushes the other one up.**



Kirkfield
Lift Lock

And we're good to go.



Canal Lake

This unique archway bridge was completed in 1905.
It's a "mass" concrete structure, built without reinforcing.



Talbot River

At Lock 37, Bolsover, we head into a series of five Talbot River locks spaced over the next 7 miles / 12 kilometres.



Talbot River

Lock 39, Portage. Most of the junior staff are girls.
In this case the Lock Master is also a woman.



Talbot River This will turn out to be the last agricultural land we'll see.



Talbot River

**There's rich soil here as we near the middle
of the Lake Simcoe drainage basin.**



Talbot River

The wheelhouse has been telescoped down to pass under this bridge, but Captain Brian has a hatch for checking clearances.



Talbot River

As we clear the Gamebridge lock, the last in the Talbot River sequence, we head out into Lake Simcoe.



**Lake
Simcoe**

We head across the lake towards Orillia. Lake Simcoe is the largest lake on the waterway: 300 square miles / 745 square kilometres.



Day 4
Orillia

Orillia, population 30,000, is the largest city we'll visit.



Orillia

Couchiching Beach Park. Orillia is actually on Lake Couchiching, just north of Lake Simcoe.



**Leacock
Museum**

**We have time to visit the estate of Stephen Leacock, Canada's
best-known humorist. The estate is now a National Historic Site.**



**Leacock
Museum**

**Leacock gained fame and fortune as the most popular humorist
in the English-speaking world in the 1915 through 1925 period.**



**Leacock
Museum**

**Success allowed Leacock to develop this lakeside retreat at
Old Brewery Bay, where Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching join.**



Leacock
Museum

Over his lifetime (1869-1944) Leacock wrote 35 books of humour,
most famously *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*.



**Leacock
Museum**

**Leacock enjoyed writing in the boathouse / studio on his estate,
and enjoyed fishing, sailing, and entertaining friends.**



Couchiching

**The Trent Canal takes us from Lake
Couchiching to the Couchiching Lock.**



Couchiching

What looks like an old relic is actually a vital link in the main trans-Canada freight and passenger route of CN Rail.



Couchiching Lock 42



Couchiching On our way again



Port Stanton Home for tonight.



Port Stanton

Kawartha Summer Cruise

Day 5

Port Stanton - Big Chute





Severn River After a leisurely three-mile cruise down Sparrow Lake we rejoin the Severn River for the last leg of our journey.



Severn River

**"Words cannot do justice to the rugged beauty of the Severn,
although it has moved many to poetry."**



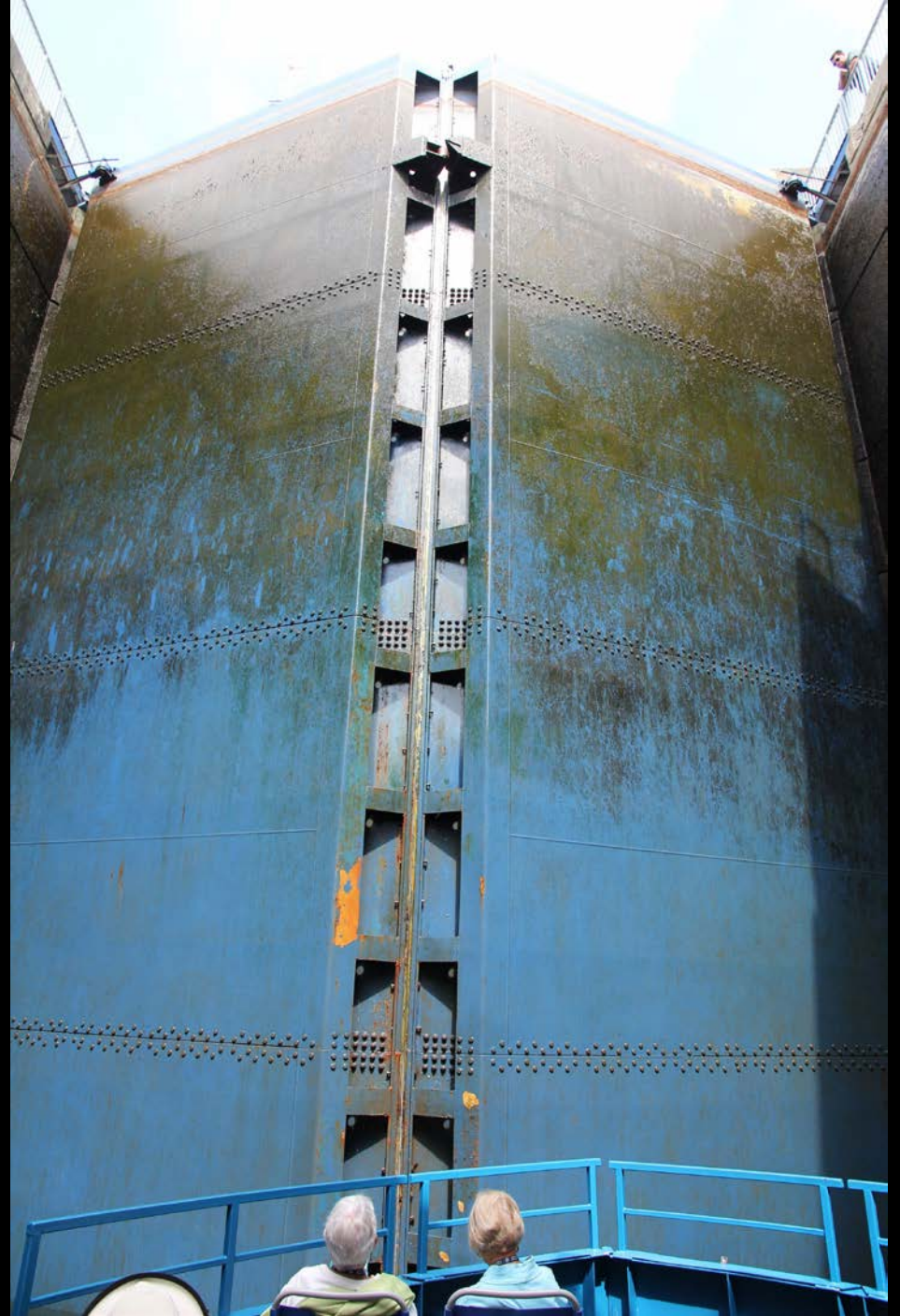
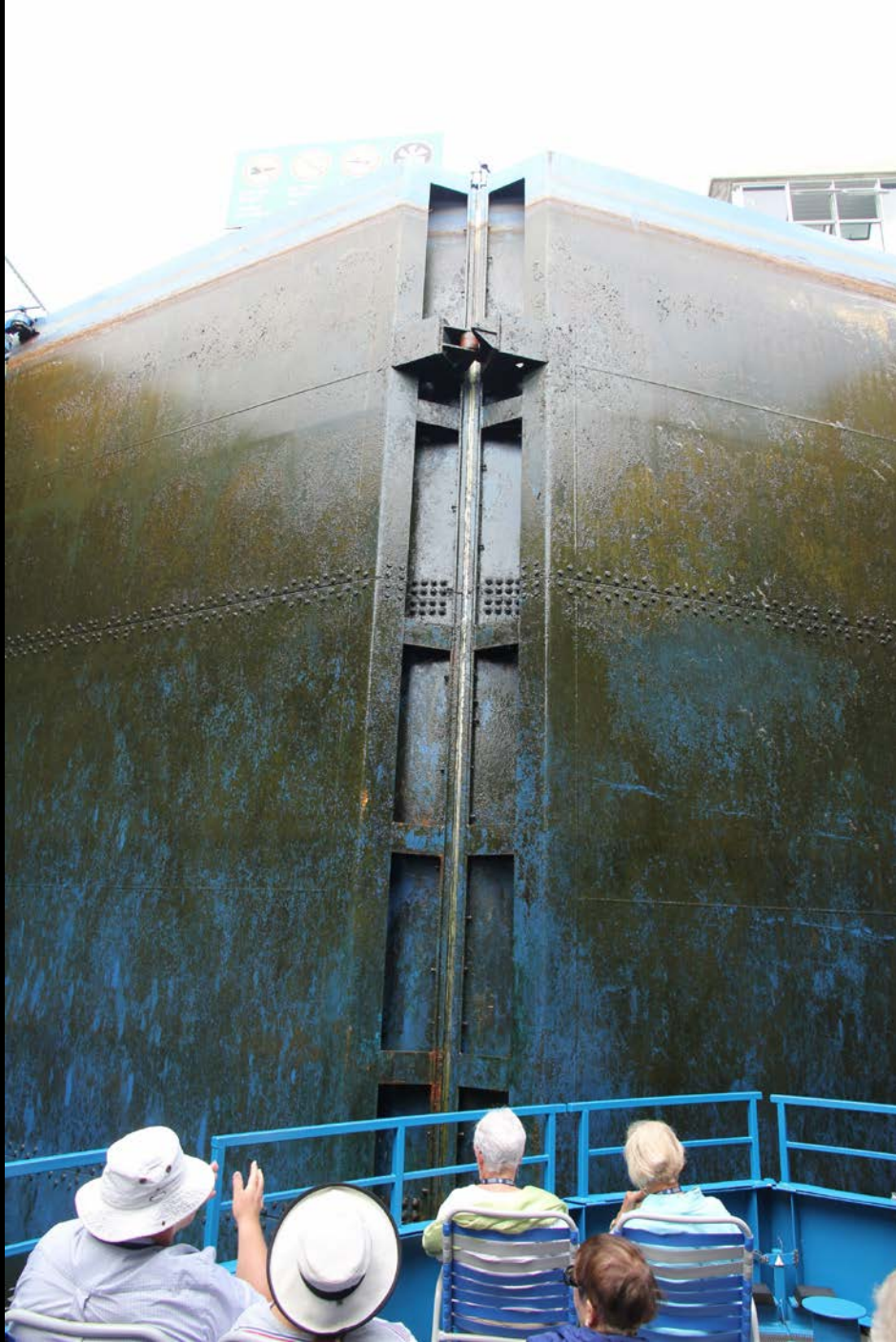
Severn River

McDonald's Cut is a man-made channel through the rock of the Canadian Shield that bypasses fast water and treacherous rocks on the Severn.

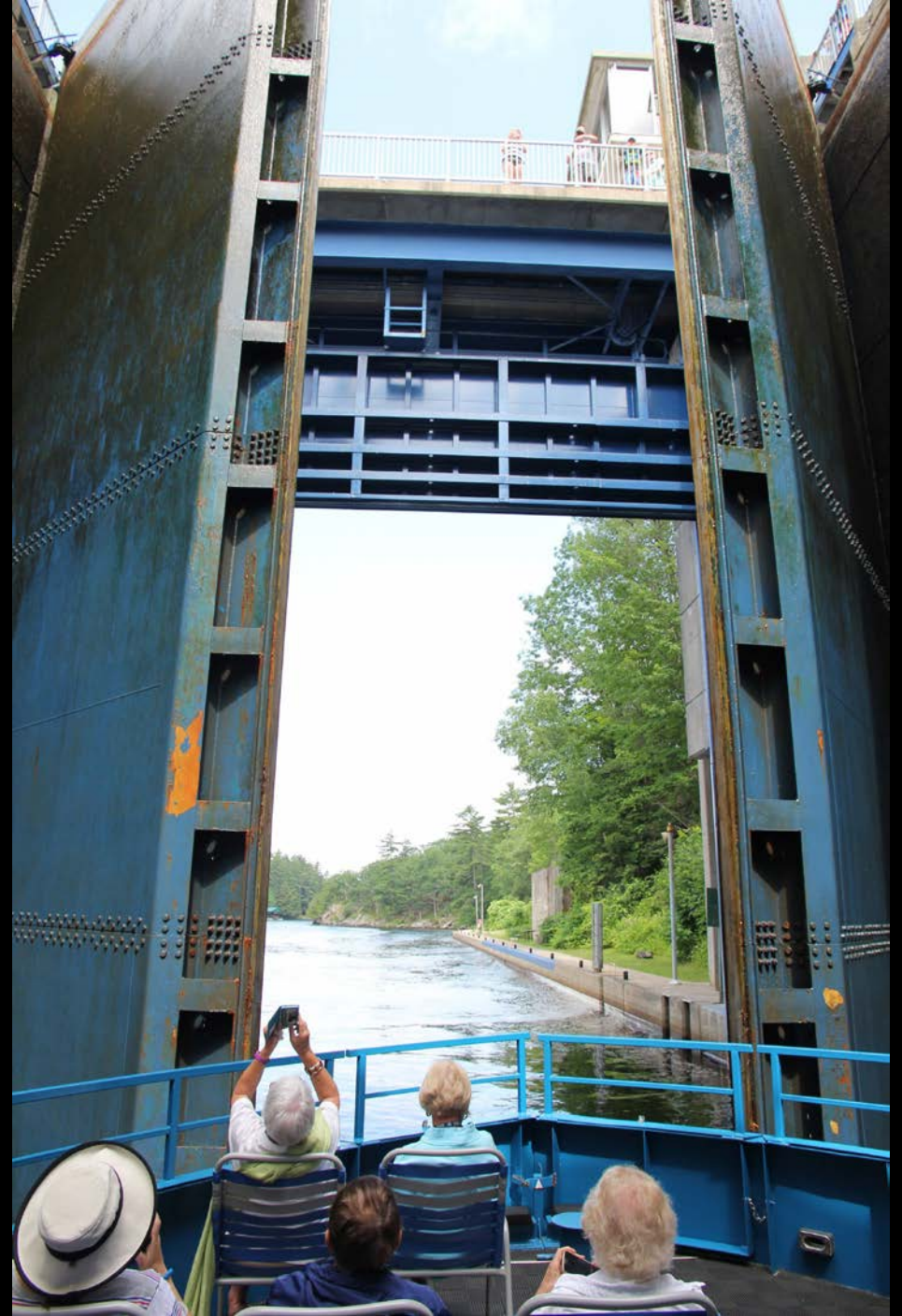


Swift Rapids

The Swift Rapids lock, completed in 1965, is the newest and deepest lock on the waterway.



Swift Rapids Going down ... 47 feet / 14 metres.



Swift Rapids And then on our way again.



Severn Falls



**Big Chute
Marine Railway**

Instead of a conventional lock ... at Big Chute boats are floated onto a partly submerged carriage and then carried on rails up or down an inclined plane.



**Big Chute
Marine Railway**

The original marine railway was build as a low-cost temporary measure in 1917 when funds were short because of the War.



**Big Chute
Marine Railway**

The new facility, completed in 1977, carries boats over a change of height of 60 feet / 18 metres.



**Big Chute
Marine Railway**

Coming up ...

continued ...



**Big Chute
Marine Railway**

A real traffic stopper ...

Success.



Adieu
Voyageur

Our ship is too big for the marine railway, so our cruise must end here.
A bus will take us back to Peterborough.



Adieu
Voyageur

But not before we extend a huge thank-you to Captain Brian
and the whole amazing *Kawartha Voyager* crew.

Kawartha Summer Cruise

Reflections



I hoped to see this part of central Ontario from a new perspective and bring back some interesting photos. I'm very happy, and you can judge for yourself about the photos.

About the cruise ...

The Ontario Waterway Cruises company is exceptionally well organized. The ship is clean, neat, and well maintained. The staff is unusually competent and amazingly friendly. The food is great and plentiful. Evening sessions are informative and entertaining.

I enjoyed this cruise but it is not for everyone.

It is designed to be relaxing, not exciting.

The guests were friendly but almost all of them were older than me. They ranged in age up through the nineties. More than half were repeat customers who return year after year.

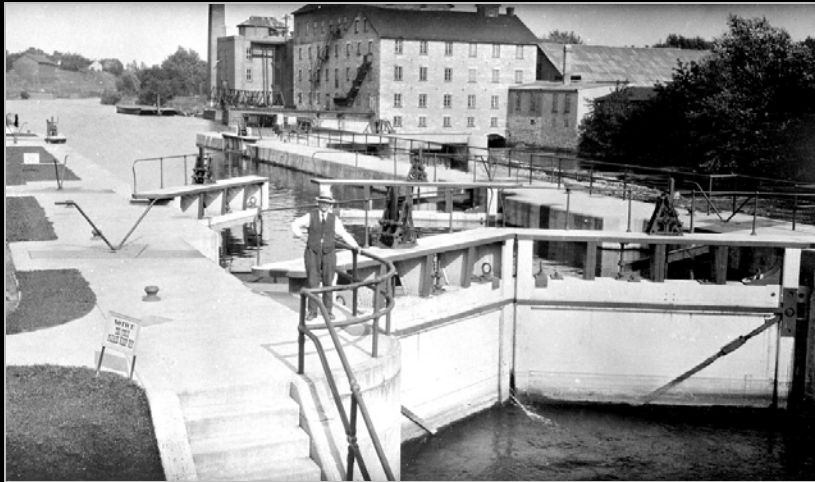
Sequences of folding up the bow for short locks followed by dropping the upper deck to pass under low bridges keeps you going up and down stairs a lot if you want to be outside.

One caution. The beds are narrow, about 24" wide. I fell out on the first night, but the floor was carpeted. After that you're careful and things are OK.



Kawartha Summer Cruise 2017

History



Lindsay Lock, circa 1920

Behind the scenic beauty of this meandering waterway lies an even more convoluted history, involving businessmen, lumber barons, railway tycoons, at least one egomaniac, and a never-ending parade of politicians.

The definitive history by James T. Angus comments: "In some respects the history of the Trent-Severn Waterway resembles the history of Canada. One parallels the other. The same political and economic tensions that have constantly beset the country can be identified in the canal's story."

If you're interested, there are links to more details on the website page for this tour.

[Trent-Severn Short History PDF](#) is my 3-page summary of highlights.

Wikipedia's 13-page [Trent-Severn Waterway](#) article provides more detail.

[A Respectable Ditch: A History Of The Trent Severn Waterway, 1833-1920](#) by James T. Angus (McGill-Queens University Press, 472 pages) is the definitive political history, currently available from [Amazon.ca](#) and [Chapters.Indigo.ca](#).

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