

Niagara

The Niagara area is a superb destination for a short and easy cycling holiday with the option to add on a wide range of diverse activities. The region is only 1 ½ hours driving time from Toronto and 45 minutes from Buffalo, New York. There are four bridge crossings from the United States into the area to make it particularly reachable by car for the American tourist. There are now two types of train service offered from Toronto to the Niagara Falls area on summer weekends so people without a car have easy access. If you fly into Hamilton, Toronto or Buffalo you can avail yourself of one of the countless shuttle or taxi options.



Once in the Niagara region, cycling is an obvious activity choice for all abilities as trails are flat and many are dedicated to non vehicular traffic only. In addition you might want to consider:

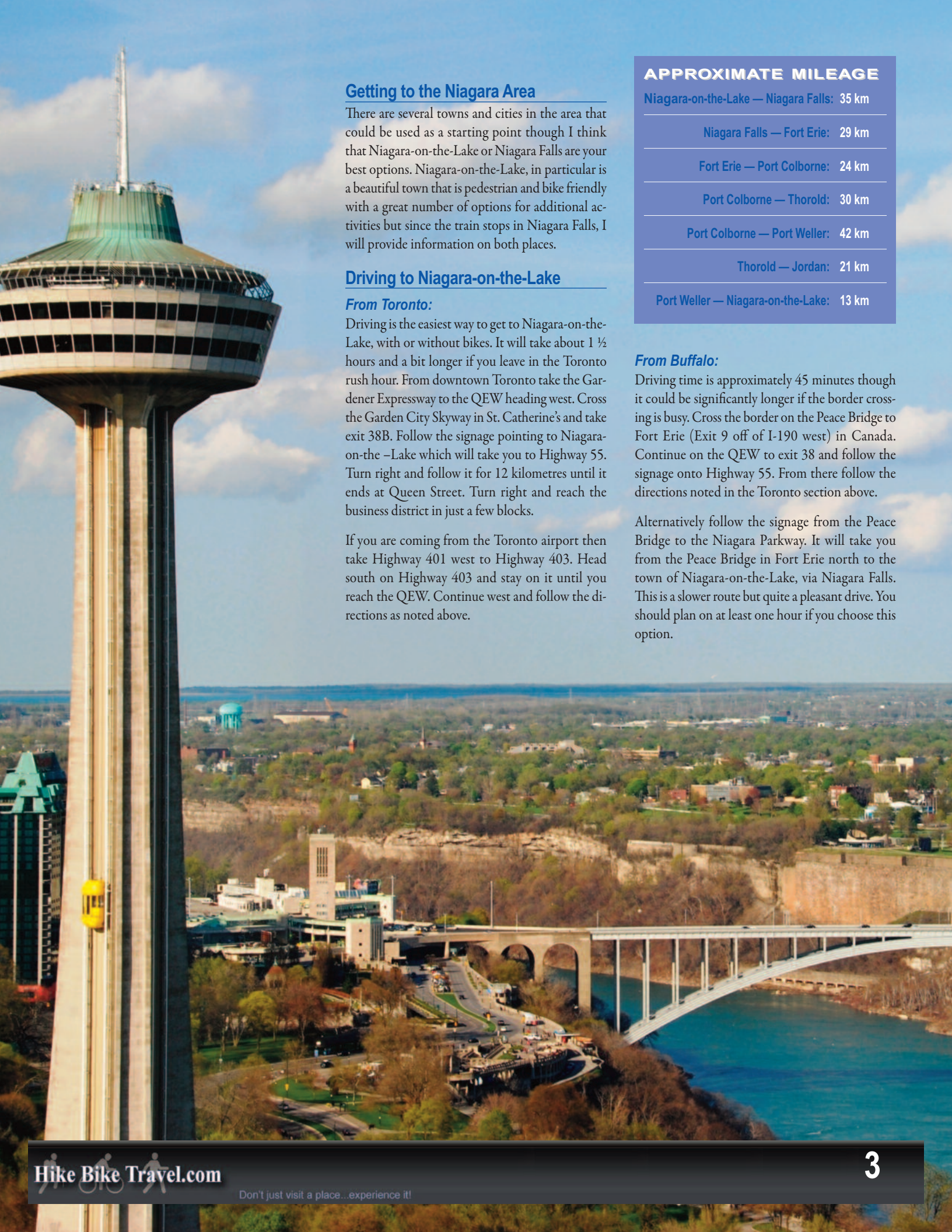
- a jet boat ride on the Niagara River
- a wet outing on the Maid of the Mist boat up close to the Niagara Falls themselves
- visiting and tasting at one of the seventy or so wineries that lie between Grimsby and Niagara-on-the-Lake
- spa visits
- a play at the world class Shaw Festival Theatre
- strolling through Niagara-on-the-Lake, one of Canada's prettiest towns
- excellent shopping and dining

The Niagara area is best visited in late spring, summer and early fall. The weather tends to be hot and humid in the summer with rain possible at anytime though rarely does it last for more than a few days. Crowds can be large in July and August and accommodation prices may be higher too. The shoulder season usually enjoys good weather with the benefit of fewer people.

Bike rentals are readily available in Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake. There is a range of accommodation choices to suit all budgets and restaurant possibilities cover the gamut of price points too. Start planning your weekend to week long get away to this picturesque area!



www.hikebiketavel.com



Getting to the Niagara Area

There are several towns and cities in the area that could be used as a starting point though I think that Niagara-on-the-Lake or Niagara Falls are your best options. Niagara-on-the-Lake, in particular is a beautiful town that is pedestrian and bike friendly with a great number of options for additional activities but since the train stops in Niagara Falls, I will provide information on both places.

Driving to Niagara-on-the-Lake

From Toronto:

Driving is the easiest way to get to Niagara-on-the-Lake, with or without bikes. It will take about 1 ½ hours and a bit longer if you leave in the Toronto rush hour. From downtown Toronto take the Gardiner Expressway to the QEW heading west. Cross the Garden City Skyway in St. Catherine's and take exit 38B. Follow the signage pointing to Niagara-on-the-Lake which will take you to Highway 55. Turn right and follow it for 12 kilometres until it ends at Queen Street. Turn right and reach the business district in just a few blocks.

If you are coming from the Toronto airport then take Highway 401 west to Highway 403. Head south on Highway 403 and stay on it until you reach the QEW. Continue west and follow the directions as noted above.

APPROXIMATE MILEAGE

Niagara-on-the-Lake — Niagara Falls: 35 km

Niagara Falls — Fort Erie: 29 km

Fort Erie — Port Colborne: 24 km

Port Colborne — Thorold: 30 km

Port Colborne — Port Weller: 42 km

Thorold — Jordan: 21 km

Port Weller — Niagara-on-the-Lake: 13 km

From Buffalo:

Driving time is approximately 45 minutes though it could be significantly longer if the border crossing is busy. Cross the border on the Peace Bridge to Fort Erie (Exit 9 off of I-190 west) in Canada. Continue on the QEW to exit 38 and follow the signage onto Highway 55. From there follow the directions noted in the Toronto section above.

Alternatively follow the signage from the Peace Bridge to the Niagara Parkway. It will take you from the Peace Bridge in Fort Erie north to the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, via Niagara Falls. This is a slower route but quite a pleasant drive. You should plan on at least one hour if you choose this option.



From Niagara Falls, New York:

Plan on 30 minutes of driving time if the border crossing is quick. Take the Rainbow Bridge across to Niagara Falls, Ontario and follow the signs for the Niagara Parkway heading north to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

From Lewiston, New York:

Take the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge and follow the signs for the Niagara Parkway, north to Niagara-on-the-Lake. If you are lucky at the border you can do this trip in about 20-25 minutes.

Driving to Niagara Falls

From Toronto:

Expect the drive to take about 1 ½ hours and more if there is heavy traffic. Driving to Niagara Falls from Toronto is very similar to driving to Niagara-on-the-Lake except that you continue further on the QEW. From the north part of Toronto follow Highway 401 west to Highway 403 south. This continues to the QEW. Alternatively from downtown Toronto head west on the Gardner Expressway to reach the QEW and continue west. Exit on Highway 420. Then turn right at MacDonald Avenue, left at Centre Street and continue a few hundred metres to reach Clifton Hill. All the Niagara Falls attractions are in this vicinity.

From Buffalo:

Cross the Peace Bridge to Fort Erie (Exit 9 off of I-190 west) and do one of two things. Follow the signage from the Peace Bridge to the Niagara Parkway and this will take you right past Niagara Falls into town in about thirty minutes with a quick border crossing. Alternatively continue from the Peace Bridge to the QEW. Exit on Highway 420. Turn right at MacDonald Avenue, left at Centre Street and continue a few hundred metres to reach Clifton Hill and most of the Niagara Falls attractions. Driving time is about 25 minutes again with a fast border crossing.

From Niagara Falls, New York:

Three bridges connect Canada and the United States in Niagara Falls. The Rainbow Bridge and the Whirlpool Bridge both directly connect the two cities but the Whirlpool Bridge can only be used by Nexus Pass holders. (a special pass that requires fingerprinting, interviews...) The Rainbow Bridge is a busy bridge but there is the alternative of taking the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge which is a few miles to the north of Niagara Falls. If you elect to do that then after crossing the bridge follow the signs south towards Niagara Falls, just about 10 minutes away.

BIKE RENTALS

The price of flying your bike with you for short trips rarely makes sense financially with fees of \$100 each way often in effect. Sometimes it is just a whole lot easier to rent and fortunately in the Niagara area, prices are reasonable and there are several options.

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

Zoom Leisure

www.zoomleisure.com
431 Mississauga Street
Ph: 905-468-2366 or 1-866-811-6993

They rent quality bikes and provide helmets and panniers upon request. A 2 day rental is \$50 and a one week rental is \$105 plus taxes. They will allow you to leave your car in their parking lot with prior arrangements.

NIAGARA FALLS

Zoom Leisure

www.zoomleisure.com
6289 Fallsview Blvd. Ph: 905-353-7232 or 1-866-811-6993

They are part of the company noted above.

Cupolo's

5510 Ferry Street Ph: 905-356-4850

Bike rentals vary from \$20 per day to \$50 per week with helmets and panniers included. They will deliver bikes to the train station with prior arrangements.

FORT ERIE

Steve's Place Bicycle & Repairs Inc.

181 Niagara Blvd. Ph: 905-871-7517

They are closed Sunday and Monday. Bike rental rates are \$25 per day and \$125 per week.

ST. CATHERINES

Rapid City Cycle

145 St. Paul St. Ph: 905-684-9111

They rent used bikes but only have a few at very reasonable rates. They are close to the train station.



Train to Niagara Falls from Toronto

There are two trains that operate in the summer months that cater to the cyclist. They operate mostly on weekends leaving from Toronto and heading to Niagara Falls with some stops. The GO Train started service in June 2009 and Bike Train Ontario is in its second year.

GO TRAIN

Spaces are allocated on a first come, first served basis. Each train has room for a total of 28 bikes with 4 bikes per car permitted. Fares with a bike to Niagara Falls are \$15.90 one way or \$31.80 return. The Go Train has four daily scheduled departures in each direction. It leaves from Union Station in Toronto with stops in Port Credit, Oakville, Burlington, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. The Niagara Falls station is at 4267 Bridge Street, two blocks from downtown. The Go Train only operates on Saturdays, Sundays and on Canada's statutory holidays. Their schedule is as follows:

Departures from Toronto's Union Station to Niagara Falls: 6:30am, 9:40am, 4:15pm, 8:05pm and 10:30pm by GO bus only.

Departures from Niagara Falls: 8:50am, 12:20pm, 7:20pm and 10:25pm.

For more information about the Go Train service visit www.gotransit.com

THE BIKE TRAIN

The Bike Train permits online reservations at www.biketrain.ca. It only departs once a day in each direction. The train runs from late June until mid October BUT it doesn't run every weekend. It does have the benefit though of running on Saturdays, Sundays, many Fridays, some Thursdays, and on the Monday of the August long weekend and

Labour Day weekend. Fares are \$31 one way and \$62 return.

Departure from downtown Toronto: 11 am only— (arriving in St. Catharines at 12:39pm and Niagara Falls at 1:00pm.)

Departure from Niagara Falls: 2:15 pm only— (arriving in St. Catharines at 2:40 pm and Toronto at 4:13 pm)

Airport Shuttles

The trip from Buffalo, Toronto and Hamilton airports to Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake can be accomplished with any one of the services listed below. All pricing is in Canadian dollars.

NIAGARA FALLS TAXI

www.travelniagara.org/transportation/taxi/
Ph: 905-357-4000

They will meet your plane and are able to take up to four passengers. Approximate prices are Toronto airport to Niagara Falls- \$180, to Niagara-on-the-Lake -\$210, Hamilton to Niagara Falls -\$110 and Buffalo to Niagara Falls -\$99.

NIAGARA AIRBUS

www.niagaraairbus.com
Ph: 905-374-8111

This is a 24 hour door to door shared ride service though for an extra fee you can book vehicles for your exclusive use. They have information desks at the baggage claims in all terminals of the Toronto airport and in Buffalo. You can also pre book a driver for Hamilton airport arrivals. A pickup in Niagara-on-the-Lake to the Toronto airport will cost \$91 for one person and \$149 for two people. Prices are considerably reduced if you can meet them at a prearranged shuttle pickup location. For example, from their Niagara Falls office a one way fare will be \$69.

CHAUFFEURED CROSS BORDER AIRPORT TRANSFERS

www.buffaloniagarachauffeuredservices.ca/
Ph: 800-599-2088

They serve Buffalo, Toronto and Hamilton airports. Rates start at \$99 to Niagara Falls for a sedan but for a fee they will take you just about anywhere in south western Ontario.

Itinerary Options

There are numerous itinerary options available in the Niagara area depending on how much time you have and what you are interested in doing. Are you a super keen biker or someone who prefers to poke along and visit every winery you see? Do you want to be self supporting or do you want your luggage moved? Do spa visits or evenings at the theatre appeal? Would you prefer to go with a tour company? How many days do you have? Add extra days in Jordan and Niagara-on-the-Lake if you want more time for relaxation.

Listed below are several itinerary options. Route descriptions and accommodation choices are dealt with in more detail further on.

Option One

Two day circle route starting and finishing in Niagara-on-the-Lake for enthusiastic cyclists. **Total distance:** 143 km on mostly flat, easy paths.

Day 1

Pick up your bike rental and a picnic lunch and head out on the Niagara River Recreation Trail (NRRT) stopping at wineries of interest for tastings. There are many picnic benches along the route to enjoy your lunch. Continue on to Niagara Falls. After visiting the Falls carry on along the NRRT to



Fort Erie. Take in the city skyline of Buffalo just across the lake and then pick up the very easy Friendship Trail. Ride the final 24 kilometres of the day to Port Colborne. Night over in Port Colborne. Total distance: about 88 km (55 miles)

Day 2

Cycle the very flat Welland Canal Trail from Lake Erie to Port Weller on Lake Ontario, a distance of 42 kilometres. Watch for huge ships traveling through the locks or take in a rowing practice or a race. In Port Weller look for the Waterfront Trail which is mostly a bike lane along the road. It takes you the 13 kilometres to Niagara-on-the-Lake. This section is wine country so you might want to finish your ride with some winery visits. Total distance: 55 km (34 miles).

Option Two

Three day circle route starting and finishing in Niagara Falls with extra time to spend in Niagara-on-the-Lake. **Total distance:** 143 km on mostly flat, easy paths.

Day 1

Pick up your bike rental in Niagara Falls. If you haven't brought a picnic or lunch supplies with you then you will probably need to pick up something close to the Falls themselves – which is mostly fast food fare. Enjoy the vistas and then head south on the Niagara Parkway to Fort Erie, about 29 kilo-

metres away. There are good city views of Buffalo here. Continue on the very flat, straight and easy Friendship Trail for 24 kilometres to Port Colborne. You may have time to cycle out to some nearby beaches. Spend the night here. Total distance: 53 km (33 miles)

Day 2

Cycle the very flat Welland Canal Trail from Lake Erie to Port Weller on Lake Ontario, a distance of 42 kilometres. This is your chance to see the large ships navigating through the locks. Also watch for the rowers on the canal. In Port Weller look for the Waterfront Trail which is mostly a bike lane along Lakeshore Road. It takes you the 13 kilometres back to Niagara-on-the-Lake. This section is wine country so you might want to finish your ride with some winery visits. There will be time to wander the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, catch a theatre production, a spa visit or even a jet boat tour on the Niagara River if you plan in advance. Night over in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Consider another night in town to take advantage of all the activities. Total distance: 55 km (34 miles).

Day 3

Leave Niagara-on-the-Lake along the most picturesque section of the Niagara Parkway. There are many wineries to visit along this section. One steep climb up the Niagara Escarpment will put you within spitting distance of Niagara Falls again. Total distance: about 35 km (22 miles). You may



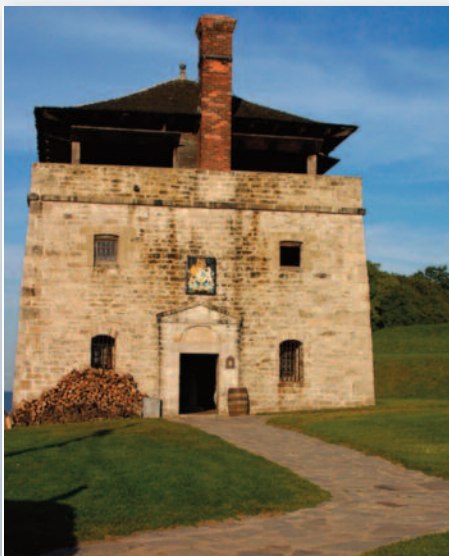
still have time to hop on board the Maid of the Mist or participate in any number of other tacky Niagara Falls money parting schemes.

Option Three

Four day route starting in Niagara-on-the-Lake with time for the Jordan area wineries. **Total distance:** 170 km plus 30-50 km more depending on side trips

Day 1

Pick up your bike rental and a picnic lunch and head out by 10:30 am. Cycle the NRRT stopping at wineries of interest for tastings. Continue on through Niagara Falls and pick one of the frequent picnic benches along the route to enjoy your lunch. After a visit to the Falls continue along the Niagara River Parkway to Fort Erie. Pick up the very easy Friendship Trail here and ride the final 24 kilometres of the day to Port Colborne. Night over in Port Colborne. Total distance: about 88 km (55 miles)



Day 2

Leave Port Colborne along the Welland Canal Trail. Follow it for 29 kilometres to Thorold. The next destination is Jordan so head east and cycle along the top of the Niagara Escarpment before dropping down towards the pretty town of Jordan. Visit any number of wineries along the way including Henry of Pelham, Hernder Estate Wines, Flat Rock Cellars or Featherstone Estate Winery to name a few. Cycle on to Jordan or beyond if you choose to stay in a B&B just outside of town. Total distance: 51-60 kilometres (30-36 miles)

Day 3

Cycle as little or as much as you want to. This is the time to venture by bike to the Beamsville area and some of its wineries, avoiding the main roads whenever possible. Mileage for the day could be as little as 20 km or easily double that with more exploration. Night over again in the Jordan area. Consider a spa service if you stay at The Inn on Twenty.

Day 4

Head back to Niagara-on-the-Lake by heading to the Waterfront Trail along the North Service Road. The Waterfront Trail is intermittent. Sometimes it is Lakeshore Boulevard you will be following, and there is also a very pleasant four kilometer stretch of the Waterfront Trail that parallels Lake Ontario just before Port Weller. Then it's back to Lakeshore and narrow shoulders for much of the ride back to Niagara-on-the-Lake. Pass by and stop at any number of wineries on the way in. Total distance: about 30 km (18 ½ miles)

Detailed Circle Route Description (Itinerary Option 1 and 2)

The circle route can be done in any direction but is described in the clockwise direction beginning in Niagara-on-the-Lake. You can also pick up the trail at any point and follow the route description from that point onwards.

From the clock tower on Queen Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake head east on Queen Street towards the Prince of Wales Hotel, just one block up, and continue straight onto Picton Street. In two blocks,

veer right onto the Queens Parade and in roughly 150 metres look for the Waterfront Trail sign and turn left. Follow it through to Fort George where you may wish to spend some time walking around. Just past Fort George turn right onto the Niagara River Recreation Trail (NRRT). The distance from the clock tower to this point is 1.7 kilometres. The Niagara River will now be on your left with views across to New York State.

The NRRT winds its way along the Niagara River, past fruit stands (where you can also buy lunch supplies – especially at Kurtz Orchard and Walkers Farm Market), wineries and some very lovely homes. The gradient here is always gentle. There are public toilets after 3.4 kilometres from the clock tower.

At approximately 12 kilometres you reach the pretty and very quiet town of Queenston. Pass the Riverbrink Art Museum where the bike path ends and follow the road through town. As the road curves right, pass the Mackenzie Printery and Newspaper Museum on your left. The museum ex-



hibits 500 years of printing technology in the restored home of the publisher William Lyon Mackenzie. The museum is open from 10am until 4pm during the summer months and adult admission is \$4.75.

Another short side trip only a block away is the Laura Secord Homestead located at 29 Queenston Street. Laura Secord is famous for having had the courage and fortitude to walk 32 kilometres to warn the British of a surprise American attack during the war of 1812. Guided tours of her homestead with an overview of the history of the area are available. Admission is \$4.75 and the homestead is open from early May until the first week of October. Summer hours are 11am to 5pm.

To continue to Niagara Falls, you must cross the junction of York Road and the Niagara Parkway. There are obvious Niagara River Recreation Trail signs in the area. Continue on the bike path again after you cross this road junction. Follow it 1.6 kilometres up the Niagara escarpment, one of only two steep hills on the entire route. At the top of the hill the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge to the United States appears. Should you wish to make a quick trip to the

States be aware of passport requirements and that there is a \$0.50 toll for bikes. If not continue along the NRRT past the bridge.

The paved trail continues for another 6 1/2 kilometres. Along the way, pass the Butterfly Pavillion and Gardens, the Floral Clock and the Adam Beck Generating Station. Look down to see the frothing rapids of the Niagara River. Where the paved trail ends, cross the road and continue on a mostly decent sized shoulder until you see the Falls.

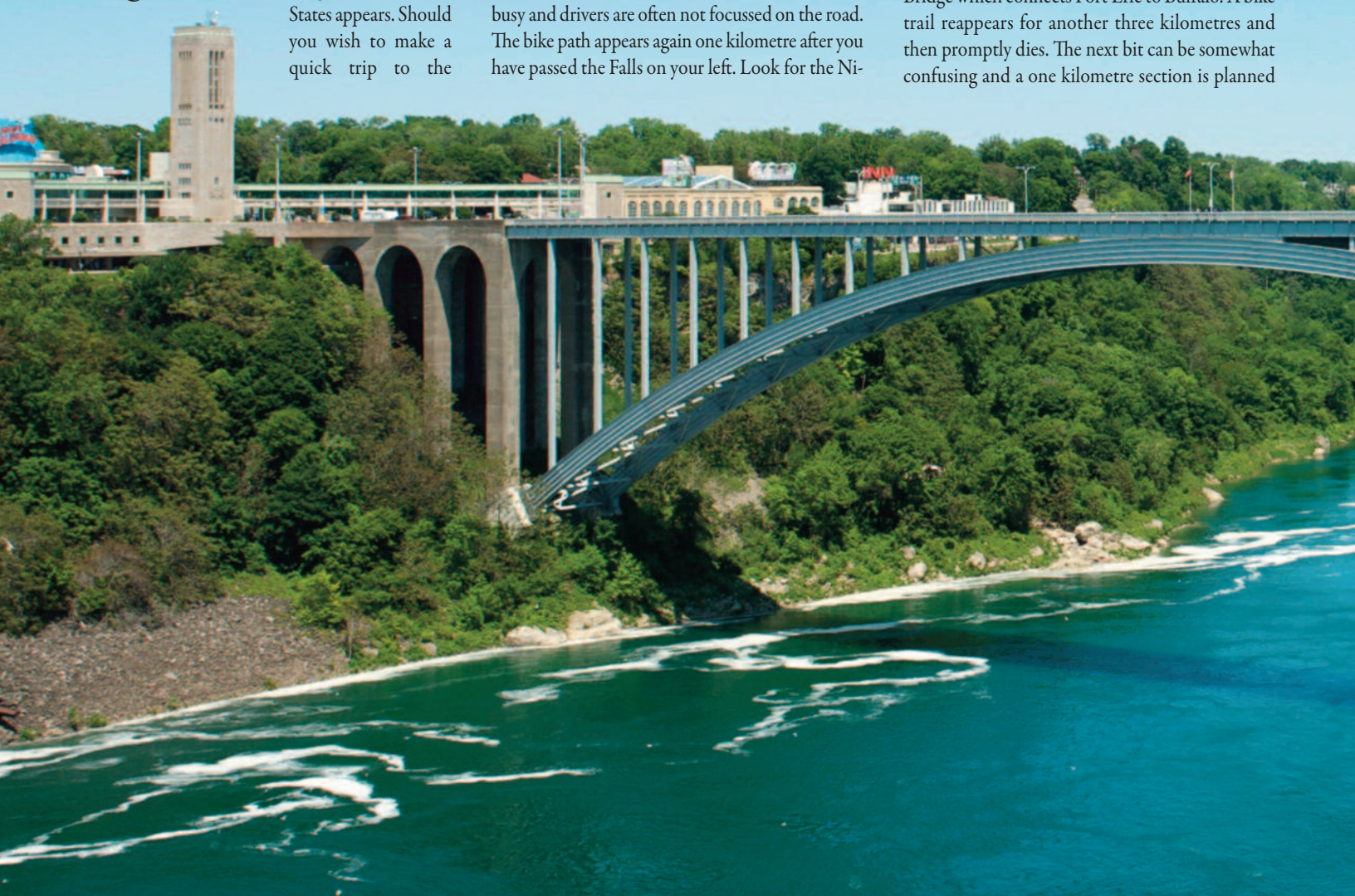
On the way to the Falls pass the Whirlpool Bridge (prohibited to bicycles) to the US and the Rainbow Bridge (another \$0.50 toll) about 4 kilometres from the end of the paved trail. The Falls themselves are obvious and it is well worth it to cross back over the road and walk your bike for the next kilometre or so. The American Falls are the first ones you see followed by the larger Canadian Falls. It is also quite a sight to watch the water above the Falls.

The area around Niagara Falls requires extreme caution on the part of the cyclists. It is usually very busy and drivers are often not focussed on the road. The bike path appears again one kilometre after you have passed the Falls on your left. Look for the Ni-



agara River Recreation Trail signs. The crowds thin and it is unlikely that you will see many more people or bikes on the trail. Continue past the town of Chippewa with its ugly views of chemical plants in New York. Twenty six easy kilometres later you arrive in Fort Erie. The trail follows the river the entire way past a parade of homes that get grander as you get closer to Fort Erie.

The trail ends, so continue on the road by the river for three kilometres until you reach the Peace Bridge which connects Fort Erie to Buffalo. A bike trail reappears for another three kilometres and then promptly dies. The next bit can be somewhat confusing and a one kilometre section is planned





to connect to the Friendship Trail in the near future. The best method of finding the Friendship Trail is to take the trail along the lakeshore until you see Bardol Avenue and turn right. Follow it to Dominion Road and turn left. Take the next left which is Bassett Avenue and head towards the lake. Bassett Avenue becomes Edgemere Road. Continue on Edgemere only one block to Helena Street and look for the Friendship Trail heading west.

The 24 kilometre Friendship Trail is a paved, three meter wide old railway line that connects Fort Erie

to Port Colborne. There are numerous beach access points along the way. In the town of Ridgeway you can pause for refreshments. There isn't a lot to see on the trail but the riding is pleasant and the bird songs are plentiful. Do be careful at all of the road crossings. It is worth slowing down and looking for cars even though there isn't much traffic.

Once you reach Port Colborne you will probably want to find your accommodation. Observe the location of the Welland Canal Trail as you head into town as this is where you will want to begin the next day. There are interesting shops on the other side of the canal down just a block from the Friendship Trail and a few of the recommended B&B's are only another three blocks away.

The Welland Canal Trail takes you 42 kilometres from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. The trail is mostly three metres wide and flat except for a one kilometre section through Thorold where you deal with the Niagara Escarpment. Along the way there are historic districts, lock viewing areas, local parks and rowers to watch.

The next morning pick up the Welland Canal Trail at the junction of the Friendship Trail in Port Colborne and head north. It is generally well signed and easy to follow especially once you get through Port Colborne. The trail parallels the canal for the first four kilometres but then heads towards Dain City and Welland. When you reach Port Robinson you will be biking parallel to the canal again.

Roughly five kilometres past Thorold is the Lock Three Museum. Here you can get an elevated view of ships from around the world and watch a video on the history of the canal. Admission is \$4.25 and it is open daily from 9am to 5pm with shorter weekend hours.

Six kilometres past the museum arrive at the intersection with Lakeshore Road. From here it is about 13 kilometres back to Niagara-on-the-Lake. Turn right onto Lakeshore Road which is a busier road and one with intermittent wide shoulders only. You'll see a few wineries as you make your way into town. Turn left when you reach Mississauga Road, ride past Zoom bicycle rentals just half a block down, and continue to Queen Street. Turn right on Queen Street and in four blocks you will have reached the clock tower and your starting point!!

For more wine tasting options turn right on Four Mile Creek Road which is about 10 kilometres past the junction with the Welland Canal trail. Take Four Mile Creek Road to Virgil and then turn left onto the busy Niagara Stone Road and take it all the way down to Queen Street. This option allows you to visit an additional four wineries. You'll end up closer to town, so you can probably schlep a few bottles back with you.





Detailed Jordan Area Wine Route Description (Option 3)

The Jordan, Vineland and Beamsville areas are home to about thirty wineries many of which enjoy a stellar international reputation especially with regards to Ice Wine and some less common varietals. The area does not have any dedicated bike trails but there are plenty of quiet side roads to make it a

worthwhile cycling destination. Detailed below is a route description though I would also recommend picking up some of the wine brochures which have excellent maps. They also highlight the busier routes which should be avoided if at all possible. There is lots of room for improvisation on your part.

Day 1

Cycle from Niagara Falls or Niagara-on-the-Lake to Port Colborne. Follow the detailed directions from the Circle Route to get to Port Colborne.

Day 2

Cycle from Port Colborne to Jordan and then become a wine tourist in this wine district.

From Port Colborne take the Welland Canal Trail until you reach the town of Thorold. Get off at Portland Street across from the Lock 7 viewing area and head straight for three blocks. Turn left onto Ormond and follow it for two blocks where it becomes Richmond. Follow Richmond to Decew and turn right. The road is a bit busier but there is a wide shoulder. Decew crosses Highway 50 and heads towards Short Hills Provincial Park, a distance of about 4 ½ kilometres from the Welland Canal Trail. Decew becomes First Street Louth in

less than a kilometre after passing Cataract.

Continue up the short but very steep First Street Louth to the junction with Eighth and Pelham. Turn left onto Pelham Road. If you are interested in a hike in Short Hills Park then your quickest access is about 1 ½ kilometres after the junction of Eighth and Pelham just south of Pelham Road. Otherwise continue on Pelham and follow it until you reach Fifth Street Louth. The 'Henry of Pelham' winery is at the junction and well worth a visit. If you're hungry take advantage of their onsite cafe.

When leaving Henry of Pelham turn right on Pelham Road and if you are interested in another quick stop try the winery at Hernder Estates, reached by taking the next right onto Seventh Avenue Louth and following it around until the very obvious barn and winery pop into view.

Another recommended visit is to Flat Rock Cellars which has a stunning location with beautiful views over the escarpment. So from Hernder Estates head back to Pelham Road, turn right and follow it as it changes to Twenty Mile Road. Almost immediately turn right onto Staff and then right again onto Seventeenth Street. The winery is located just past Seventh Avenue.





If you have had enough wine tasting and cycling for one day then head back on Seventeenth Street to Seventh Avenue. Turn right and then right again on Nineteenth Street. Turn left on Highway 81/King Street and after one block on the highway turn right onto Main Street in Jordan. If you have chosen the Inn on Twenty to stay at you will find it at the end of the block. Several of the B&B's mentioned in the accommodation section are only a short distance away.

Day 3

Jordan Area – Cycle the country roads with wine tasting stops. On day three of your trip, the idea is to explore the backroads in the area of Jordan, Vineland and Beamsville but by doing your very best to avoid the busy Highway 81/King Street. Beamsville wineries seem to have some of the best reputations in the area. They can be reached from Jordan via either a loop south of King Street or by heading north of King Street and winding your way over on quiet country roads. With a relaxed attitude you could head where the wind blows you but if there are must visit wineries then take the time to map out in advance your priorities and head out from there. So grab a local map and make today a day of random exploration.

Day 4

Return to Niagara-on-the-Lake. Leave Jordan's Main Street and follow it north as it then becomes Wismer Road. Turn left on Nineteenth Street, right on Red Maple Avenue and then left on the busier Jordan Road, which has a bike lane. Continue on Jordan Road, under the QEW, to the North Service Road and turn right. Follow it for four kilometres to Gregory and turn left. Go down to Lakeshore Road. Look for signs indicating the Waterfront Trail, which is mostly a bike lane on the road. Continue on Lakeshore into Port Dalhousie. You might want to explore the waterfront of this little town. The bike lanes have a habit of intermittently disappearing but if you use an ounce of common sense you won't get lost.

Turn right on Lakeport once you are through Port Dalhousie and take it until you reach Lakeshore Road. Turn left onto Lakeshore and left again within two blocks onto Lighthouse Road. Follow the very obvious signage for the Waterfront Trail from this point for roughly four kilometres to Port Weller. You will be led along the shores of Lake Ontario, through quiet residential streets and municipal parks all the way to the Welland Canal. Continue to follow the signs at Port Weller as they take you back up to Lakeshore Road. There is a very short section of trail east of Port Weller along the water but my recommendation is to turn left on Lakeshore Road and stay on it until you reach Niagara-on-the-Lake in thirteen kilometres. Again there are some fine wineries, as highlighted in the Circle Loop itinerary, to visit if you haven't exhausted your taste buds.

Lakeshore Road deposits you at the intersection with Mississauga Street. Turn left on Mississauga

and continue past Zoom Rentals to Queen Street. Turn right and in four blocks you will have reached the clock tower and likely your starting point if you departed from Niagara-on-the-Lake!! If you are headed to Niagara Falls then follow the route details in the Circle Loop Itinerary.

Accommodation Choices Along the Proposed Routes

There is a new B&B group who have aligned themselves to make it easier for cyclists to do the circle route without transporting their own luggage. Each of the B&B's listed on their website will, with advance notice, move your luggage for a fee. Visit www.cycleandstayniagara.com to learn which ones can be of help.

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

Niagara-on-the-Lake is considerably more expensive than the other towns in the area and often in the summer season, many places require a two night minimum. However the town is also worth a little more time, especially if you like theatre, shopping, golf, wine tasting, spa visits and dining. Perhaps you can fulfill the two night minimum at either the beginning or the end of a circle tour trip. In Niagara-on-the-Lake there are over 125 B&B's as well as several hotels. Accommodation choices are broken into expensive, moderate and less expensive (for Niagara-on-the-Lake!!) and all prices are based on double occupancy.

Most of the accommodation choices are within walking distance of everything the town has to offer unless you have picked a B&B in Garrison Village on the outskirts.

EXPENSIVE

OBAN INN

www.obaninn.ca

160 Front Street

Ph: 905-468-2165 or 866-359-6226

Rates are \$260 and up per night in season.

PILLAR AND POST

www.vintage-hotels.com/niagara-on-the-lake/hotels/pillar-and-post.php

48 John Street West

Ph: 905-468-3551 or 888-669-5566.

Rates start at \$360 per night in season.

PRINCE OF WALES HOTEL

www.vintage-hotels.com/niagara-on-the-lake/hotels/prince-of-wales.php

6 Picton Street

Ph: 905-468-3246 or 888-669-5566

Rates start at \$315 per night.

QUEENS LANDING

www.vintage-hotels.com/niagara-on-the-lake/hotels/queens-landing.php

155 Byron Street

Ph: 905-468-2227 or 888-669-5566

Rates start at \$315 a night in the summer.

MODERATE

SCHOOLMASTER'S HOUSE

www.schoolmastershouse.com

307 Mississauga Street

Ph: 905-468-1299

Rates are \$145 and up. A two night minimum is in effect on the weekend.

HERON HOUSE

www.niagarabb.com/heron.htm

356 Regent Street

Ph: 905-468-4553

Rates are \$145 per night.

COLONEL BUTLER

BEST WESTERN INN

www.colonelbutlerinn.com/niagara-on-the-lake/

278 Mary Street

Ph: 905-468-3251 or 866-556-8882

Rates start at \$179 per night midweek in the summer.

LESS EXPENSIVE

ALMAR HOUSE

www.bbcanada.com/almarhouse

339 Mary Street

Ph: 905-468-1368

Rates are \$99 per night.

GRAPE WREATH

www.grapewreath.com

1157 Lakeshore Road

Ph: 905-646-0534

Rates are \$90 on weekends and \$85 per night during the week.

NIAGARA FALLS

Niagara Falls attracts more of an international crowd. They are drawn to see Niagara Falls which can be enjoyed from the walkway along the road above the Falls or from river level on the Maid of the Mist or on a Niagara River jet boat tour. It is also a well known spot for gambling, golfing, shopping, and other activities typical of a tourist town that I personally don't enjoy. However, no matter how touristy the place gets there is something very magical about witnessing the force of the Falls and the power of the river. The huge number of annual tourists ensures that there are lots of accommodation choices from very cheap to moderately expensive. Many hotel chains are represented, including Sheraton, Radisson, Hilton, Embassy Suites, Crowne Plaza, Courtyard by Marriott and more. Listed below are a few B&B's that are along the bike route and within walking distance of the Falls.

RIVER'S EDGE B&B

www.bbonline.com/on/riversedge/

171 River Road

Ph: 905-353-1168

They are a 10 minute walk to the Falls. Prices are \$100 per night.

PARK PLACE B&B

www.parkplaceniagara.com/home.htm

4851 River Road

Ph: 905-358-0279

Walking distance to Niagara Falls. Rates are \$150-\$175 per night for well appointed rooms.

CHESTNUT INN

www.bbcanada.com/1895.html

4983 River Road
Ph: 905-374-7623

Only a one mile walk or bike ride to the Falls. Rates are \$95-\$110 per night.

FORT ERIE

Fort Erie would not be my choice of where to stay. The town isn't as interesting or pretty as others in the region and there is considerably less to choose from. Nonetheless, here are two possibilities.

FRIENDSHIP TRAIL BED & BREAKFAST

www.friendshiptrailbandb.ca

328 Kraft Road
Ph: 905-871-1424

Rates are \$85 -\$110 per night depending on the room and they will transfer your luggage for a fee.

HOLIDAY INN

www.holidayinn.com

1485 Garrison Road
Ph: 877-660-8550

Rates are about \$112 per night.

PORT COLBORNE

The town of Port Colborne sits on Lake Erie at the southern end of the Welland Canal. There are some nice local beaches and a small revitalized historic district between the Welland Canal and King Street where you can find specialty shops and restaurants. Listed below is a sampling of what is offered by way of accommodation in town.

KING GEORGE INN

www.thekinggeorgeinn.ca/

239 King Street West
Ph: 905-834-8096

The inn is housed in what was formerly the Port Colborne Post Office. They have 12 rooms with summer rates starting at \$90 per night.

KENT HOUSE B&B

www.kenthousebandb.com

115 Kent Street
Ph: 905-834-1206

Rates are \$100 per night and all rooms have a shared bathroom. There is a very nice sitting room for guests. The lady running the B&B is wonderful and most welcoming. She will assist with luggage transfer and offers packed lunches.

GRACE'S VICTORIAN B&B

www.bbcanada.com/gracesvictorianbandb

77 Kent Street
Ph: 905-835-8037

Rates are \$85-\$120 per night with shared and private bathrooms.

TALWOOD MANOR B&B

www.bbcanada.com/talwoodmanorbb

303 Fielden Avenue
Ph: 905-834-6049

The B&B is located across from the summer theatre and is within walking distance to shops and restaurants. Rates are \$100-\$150 per night.

JORDAN AND VINELAND AREA

If you are a wine lover then cycling the quiet but hillier back roads from Rockway to the Grimsby area whilst moving from winery to winery is a not to be missed activity. The only negative about cycling is that you can't carry much wine although you can ship it or pick it up by car on the way back home. In addition to wineries the small town of Jordan offers shopping, fine dining and spa services at the well appointed Inn on Twenty. You may need to consider dining possibilities if you are self supported so check in with the B&B's ahead of time. Many of the wineries offer fine dining, especially on weekends.

INN ON TWENTY

www.innonthetwenty.com/

3845 Main Street, Jordan
Ph: 800-701-8074

This is one of the premier inns in the Niagara area. Rates vary between \$219 and \$359 per night depending on the room choice.





BLACK WALNUT MANOR

www.bbcanada.com/blackwalnutmanor

4255 Victoria Avenue, Vineland
Ph: 905-562-8675 or 800-859-4786

A friendly and very helpful couple runs this B&B which is close to Jordan Station and lots of wineries. Prices are \$140 to \$205 per night.

RED MAPLE B&B

www.redmaplebb.com/

2393 Red Maple Avenue, Jordan Station
Ph: 905-562-9682

Rooms are \$155-\$170 with complimentary afternoon wine and tea.

BULLFROG POND B&B

www.bullfrogpond.com/

3801 Cherry Avenue, Vineland
Ph: 905-562-1232

The B&B is within walking distance of several wineries. Rooms are \$130-\$145 per night.

PORT DALHOUSIE

This small town known for its beaches and laid back, party type atmosphere, is a convenient stop on the circle route on the way back to Niagara-on-the-Lake which is about a 1 ½ hours by bicycle away. There are a few convenient B&B's noted below.

B&B ON MAIN

www.bbcanada.com/12022.html

169 Main Street
Ph: 905-937-9326

This is a conveniently located B&B with prices between \$90-\$150 per night.

ALMOST EDEN

www.bbcanada.com/almosteden

186 Main Street
Ph: 905-934-9782

They are a short walk away from the Henley Regatta, theatre, shops and restaurants. Rooms average \$115 per night.

THOROLD

The town of Thorold was not the quaint, little town I had hoped for. It has some pretty treed residential areas but the few downtown streets feel like they are stuck in another era. There are slim pickings for dinner unless you can eat at the Keefer Mansion or you are prepared to walk about 2 kilometres to the Keg Restaurant. However, the town is located right near the bike path along the canal so it is a convenient spot to spend the night depending on where you started.

THE KEEFER MANSION INN

www.keefermansion.com

14 St. David's St. West
Ph: 905-680-9581

Rates start at \$129 per night. There is an onsite spa and restaurant. The Inn is a designated regional landmark and was built 120 years ago by John Keefer. The Keefer family, in addition to being politically active in Canada had an important role in large engineering works like the Welland Canal.

ROBINSONG B&B

www.bbcanada.com/robinsong

41 Welland St. South
Ph: 905-680-2427

This is an impeccably clean B&B with rooms running between \$69 and \$79 per night. Breakfasts are excellent. They are part of the "Cycle and Stay Niagara" group so if arranged ahead of time they can transfer luggage for a fee.

THE INN AT LOCK SEVEN

www.innatlock7.com

24 Chapel St. South
Ph: 905-227-6177

Rates are \$75 to \$110 per night. They will also move your luggage for a fee.

Non Cycling Activities

The list below is an incomplete sampling of some of the activities available in the Niagara area. The Niagara Falls area has many more attractions (that word depends on your point of view) and they can be accessed by visiting www.niagarafrontier.com.



WINE TASTINGS AND TOURS

There are fifty plus wineries stretching from Grimsby to Niagara-on-the-Lake covering the whole gamut from small, very personalized operations to those whose lifeblood are the tour buses. There are 18 wineries in the Niagara-on-the-Lake area alone so biking and visiting wineries can easily consume a few days time. If you are a serious oenophile then you might want to visit as many as you can and make it the real focus of your trip. Others might be happy just to tour a few of them, enjoy a meal and time a visit to coincide with music in the vineyard. Visit www.musicniagara.com to see the program and find the available dates at either Inniskillin Winery or Peller Estate Winery.

When you bike south on the Niagara Parkway towards Niagara Falls there are six wineries in view of the road. Another grouping of them can be found on the way into Niagara-on-the-Lake via the Lakeshore Road and Niagara Stone Road. These ones are well positioned to visit at the end of the circle route. The Vineland and Beamsville area contain the majority of the other wineries and require a major detour off of the circle route.

You could do some advance planning by visiting www.winesofontario.ca or www.niagarawineries.ca to read up on specific wineries. You will also get current information on what special events are offered, and what if any food is served. One day late in the afternoon I particularly enjoyed a flight of wines paired with appropriate cheeses at the Jackson Triggs Winery. Other wineries like Reif and Marynissen are nicely set up with picnic tables so buy a bottle of wine and enjoy your picnic under the shade of some big trees. Henry of Pel-

ham and Featherstone wineries are just two of many that offer a lovely lunchtime meal. The Strewn Winery houses Canada's only winery cooking school offering day and weekend classes. Visit www.winecountrycooking.com for more dates and course information.

Most wineries are now charging a nominal sum for wine tasting, especially if it involves the more expensive ice wine. You will find that each winery has its own personality with some being very welcoming like Henry of Pelham, Frogpond Farm and Featherstone. Others (which will remain unnamed) have a most condescending manner, though if you are in a large group that is less likely to happen.

The group 'Wines of Ontario' puts out a great guide with a map. Their brochure is readily available at most wineries, hotels and B&B's. It will provide you with opening and closing hours, tour times, and a small blurb about what each winery is best known for.

Even if you aren't a wine connoisseur you can still have some fun visiting the wineries. Many of them offer a delicious sparkling grape juice and a number of them (usually the larger ones) have great gift shops that are enjoyable to wander through. Offerings like vineyard pressed grapeseed oil, infused vinegars and wine based jam and jellies, are some of the products now available.

NIAGARA RIVER JET BOAT TRIPS

www.whirlpooljet.com

Ph: 905-468-4800 or 888-438-4444

If you like the thrill of big water and fast boats this just might be the perfect trip for you. Boats with 1500 horsepower engines take you for a 45-60 minute ride, depending on where you boarded, up the Niagara River to the gorge where the walls on either side of you reach 200 feet high. The trips go to about 1.6 kilometres short of Niagara Falls, just before a section of Class 6 (huge, scary) water that is not navigable.

There are three locations to pick up the boat – 61 Melville Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake which is a 10 minute walk from the clock on the main street, 3050 Niagara Parkway near the Whirlpool Golf Course before you reach the city of Niagara Falls and at 115 South Water Street in Lewiston, New York. There are options for covered and uncovered boats. You must be prepared to get wet and in fact, bathing suits are recommended in the summer. All boats are safety certified.

The tours operate from the third week of April

until the third week of October and adult prices are \$57 Canadian plus taxes.



MAID OF THE MIST

www.maidofthemist.com/en

The boat ride on the Maid of the Mist allows you to experience the roar and the spray (raincoats provided) from Niagara Falls as you get up close and personal to the Canadian side of the Falls. The season begins operation when the ice has cleared from the Niagara River and ends around October 24th. Rates are \$14.50 per adult and trips run from 9am until 7:45 pm in the height of the summer. The last departure in May and June is at 5:45pm. The Maid of the Mist is accessed at the bottom of Clifton Hill in Niagara Falls.



SHAW FESTIVAL THEATRE

www.shawfest.com

The theatre has been around since 1973 and continues to evolve. Presently there are three theatres offering plays written by Bernard Shaw, his contemporaries and plays about the period of Shaw's lifetime which spanned 1856-1950. Many visitors come to Niagara-on-the-Lake solely for the purpose of enjoying several days' worth of plays. You should consider planning in advance as shows are often sold-out. Visit the website to get this year's offerings and ticket prices.



BUTTERFLY CONSERVATORY

www.niagaraparks.com/garden/butterfly.php

2405 Niagara Parkway, Niagara Falls on the grounds of the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens. It is open daily with summer hours from 10am to 7pm. Admission is \$11.50 plus tax. Observe 2000 tropical butterflies in a rainforest setting.

FORT GEORGE

www.pc.gc.ca/eng/lhn-nhs/on/fortgeorge/index.aspx

The entrance to the Fort is a left turn off of Queens Parade which is reached by following Queen Street through town and out towards Niagara Falls. The Fort is open from 10am until 5pm from May 1st until October 31st and on weekends in April and November. Admission is \$11.70 per adult.

During the War of 1812 Fort George was the headquarters for the centre division of the British Army. It fell into American hands for seven months before it was retaken and stayed in British hands until the conclusion of the war. Now you can wander the fort at your leisure, visit eight restored buildings, enjoy the sight of staff in costume and in the summer months take advantage of musket and military music demonstrations.

Tour Companies

You might prefer to have someone else take care of all the details and organizing. The companies listed below will do that in addition to moving your luggage and carrying your wine purchases.

NIAGARA GETAWAYS WINE TASTING AND TOURS

www.niagaragetaways.com/
32 Queen Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake
Ph: 905-68-7367

They offer one day tours for \$Cdn89.

SOJOURN BICYCLING AND ACTIVE VACATIONS

www.gosojourn.com
Ph: 1-800-730-4771

Guided six day and five night tours are offered for \$US2495.

PACKING LIST		
BIKE EQUIPMENT	CLOTHES	OTHER
• bike pump	• underwear and socks, biking and otherwise	• cycling glasses/sunglasses
• tire irons	• leg and arm warmers depending on the season	• camera + extra batteries
• spare inner tubes	• booties for rain protection	• cell phone or phone card
• patch kit	• cycling gloves	• cash + debit card
• cycle odometer	• bike shorts and short and long sleeved bike jerseys depending on the season	• Ziploc bags + large plastic bags for panniers
• bike lock	• long biking pants depending on the season	• panniers and a handlebar bag if not supplied
• repair tools with Allen wrenches	• rain gear for top and bottom	• nylon bags for dirty clothes
• bungee cord	• windproof fleece jacket	• map, guide and itinerary
• your own pedals and bike shoes (optional)	• jeans and/or shorts	• Swiss army style of knife + spoon and fork (optional)
• helmet and helmet cover for rain	• after biking tops – long and short sleeved	• headlamp + extra batteries or a bike light in case you're on the road when it gets dark
• water bottles	• shoes and/or sandals	• first aid kit
	• bandana	• prescription and non prescription drugs
		• sunscreen and toiletries
		• energy bars

MILEAGE CONVERTER:
1 KILOMETER = 0.621371192 MILES

NIAGARA WINE TOURS INTERNATIONAL

www.niagaraworldwinetours.com
92 Picton Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake
Ph: 800-680-7006

They offer partial and full day tours of local wineries, with and without a meal component, for prices starting at \$Cdn65 for a tour of three wineries.

RANDONNEE TOURS

www.randonneetours.com/
Ph: 1-800-242-1825
Five days and four nights are offered for \$Cdn1615 on a self guided basis. The luxurious lodging option is more expensive.

Useful Websites

NIAGARA WINE INFORMATION
www.winesofontario.ca

NIAGARA FALLS ATTRACTIONS

www.niagarafrontier.com/attractions.html

BIKE TRAIN INFORMATION

www.biketrain.ca

GO TRANSIT TRAIN INFORMATION

www.gotransit.com

NIAGARA -ON-THE-LAKE WEATHER

www.theweathernetwork.com/weather/caon0476

CURRENCY CONVERTER

www.xe.com

MILEAGE CONVERTER

www.metric-conversions.org/