

JU-SI ADVENTURES



THE RIDEAU TRAIL



**September
2021**

**Walking From
Home to Ottawa to Kingston and back Home**

The Rideau Trail is roughly 387 kilometers of hiking trails between Ottawa and Kingston that generally follows the Rideau River, several of its tributaries, and the Rideau Canal. It is made up of one third paved roads and two thirds gravel roads, rail trails, and nature trails. The terrain is generally flat, but on the nature trail sections, the terrain is rolling and can be challenging.

Our travel plans for this summer were thwarted by the ongoing pandemic. A search of local trails provided us with several options. Our pick was the Rideau Trail.

Our plan was set, we would leave from the farm, where we live, south of Smiths Falls, and join the trail near Merrickville. From there we would head to Ottawa, turn around and walk to Kingston. Then we would retrace our steps and head home. All in all, this Yo-Yo (back and forth on the trail) would be about 700 kilometers and would take about 25 days.

Our feet were itchy to leave on September first. Once on the way, we realised how cooped up we had felt these last eighteen months. Our short walks in our neighborhood, and even the short getaways for extended hikes were just not long enough to satisfy our yearning for the Trail.

Our pace denoted our excitement and we soon found ourselves at our camp destination, Kilmarnock Locks. The meditative state we so love of long walks came quickly. Our minds at peace, we lounged around and enjoyed watching the lock master and his crew manage the many boats crossing the locks. A retired man, Donald, came by to talk. He had an antique boat moored nearby. He was proud of his prize possession and showed us pictures of it and recounted the many shows he had participated in. His passion was contagious.



Day two, we left the locks early and headed toward Marlborough Forest. On the way, we met a canoeist and some boaters crossing the locks at the Kilmarnock, Nicholson, Merrickville, and at Burritt's Rapids. It became a game. Our pace remained brisk, and we reached the locks before they did. We greeted them and cheered them on to their next destination.



Any flat spot will do!

at Mark Woods Cabin.

Day four, we headed toward Richmond and Fallowfield. This section was mostly road walking, not exciting but fast. Stoney Swamp Provincial Park was a challenge for our cart (the Wheelie). The name said it all: it was rocky and boggy! It was there we faced a

In the late afternoon, we entered the Marlborough Forest. The humid forest conservation area was a mixed-use area. We found a flat spot not far from the trail and set up camp for the night. As we lay down, we heard ATV enthusiasts riding nearby for some sunset fun. The trail was a mix of rutty dirt tracks and natural trails. Day three was spent crossing Marlborough Forest and enjoying this beautiful trail, lovely wetlands and even a wonderful spot for lunch



Mark Woods Camp

familiar challenge: where to camp? The Park prohibited camping. We had walked over 35 kilometers and the sun was setting. We still had too great a distance to reach the Wesley Clover Campground, the next available camping spot. We decided to call a cab and spend the night in a hotel.

Day five, we left the hotel and rejoined the trail and entered Ottawa. Britannia Beach was busy with outdoor exercising classes and family BBQ's. It was great to see so many people out enjoying the outdoors. We had booked a hotel in the Westborough area where we would sleep for two nights. It was perfect planning. As soon as we entered the hotel, the skies opened up and it poured! The following day (six), the walk into downtown and the Rideau Canal Locks was enjoyable. There were a lot of visitors on the paths, and this made me (Julie) a bit uneasy, so we didn't stay too long. Walking back to the hotel the weather turned quickly from partially cloudy to downpour. Luckily, we were near a coffee shop; we ducked in for a cuppa and waited the storm out.



The Rideau Canal Locks - Ottawa

We spent a bit of time before leaving Ottawa, looking at the return trail options. By using some roads exiting Ottawa we could rejoin the trail in Stoney Swamp and make it back to Fallowfield in one day. At the T. Carisse park, we asked some locals where we could set up our tent. A generous fellow offered his front yard. Thanks Mike! That night it poured. The rain kept on falling all through the morning – day seven. By the time we reached Tim Horton's in Richmond, we were soaked. But a warm drink and some food lifted our spirits.



Merrickville Lockmaster House - After a thunderstorm

The benefit of a Yo-Yo was that we had spotted some good camping locations on the way and felt more at ease walking longer days, knowing where we would spend the nights. We had a great spot in the Marlborough Forest (day eight), the locks at Merrickville (day nine), and our own bed at the farm day ten). In Merrickville, we met a member of the Rideau trail association, Paula. She had seen our post and wished us well on our trek.

Day eleven we reached Perth after crossing some difficult private land trails which were completely unmaintained. At one point Simon tripped over the rutted ground. I had to help him untangle himself from the hip-high reeds so he could get up again. Day twelve, we were joined for three days by my cousin for a section walk. Jyoti was a strong hiker, an experienced camper, and a lot of fun.

We had no reservations having her join us. She, on the other hand, was a bit nervous. But within a few hours it was obvious to her that she would be okay. Our pace did not change, and she even offered to pull the Wheelie on some sections.



McParlan House - Murphy Point Provincial Park

With Jyoti, we crossed the Mica Mine conservation area and Round Lake Park. The next day (thirteen), we walked through Murphy Point Provincial Park where the old Lally and McParlan's homesteads still stood. That night we camped at the Narrows locks. We enjoyed watching the many boaters cross the locks. The last was the Rideau Canal Cruise. In fact, the chef of the cruise boat offered the lockmaster and us some lemon tarts. It was an offer we could not refuse!

Our last day with Jyoti (fourteen), we exited the Foley Conservation area and walked into Westport where her husband would pick her up. After our goodbyes, we still had a distance to travel. The camp spot denoted on the Association's map, along Massassauga road, was overgrown and unusable. We walked over 40 kilometers that day to find a discrete flat spot beyond Benson Lake.

There was a thunderstorm that night, so I'm told. I slept right through it. Our Z-Pack tent was bomb proof, and we were dry and cozy throughout the wind and deluge. Our friends and family sent us notes the next day to see if we were okay. Thanks for all your concerns, but we have been through many a storm.

The trail from Chaffey's locks meandered into rocky and swampy terrain and along portions of the Cataraqi Trail (day fifteen). I thanked Simon repeatedly for valiantly pulling the Wheelie over this rough ground, but the difficulty did slow us down some. After our resupply stop in Sydenham, we walked along a familiar section of the Cataraqi Trail. This area was also part of the Trans Canada Trail. In the late afternoon, both Simon and I recognized a camping spot we had used two years ago. It was perfect timing and we happily set up camp, had a swim in the lake, and ate our supper.

Day sixteen and seventeen we walked on some tough trails in Frontenac Parc, then the rail trails of the Cataraqi and the K&P (Kingston to Pembroke). These were busy with cyclists and hikers. In Kingston, we spent the first day (eighteen) walking the last few kilometers into town, visiting this beautiful city, and purchasing some supplies for our return trip. Day two of our stay in



Along the Cataraqi

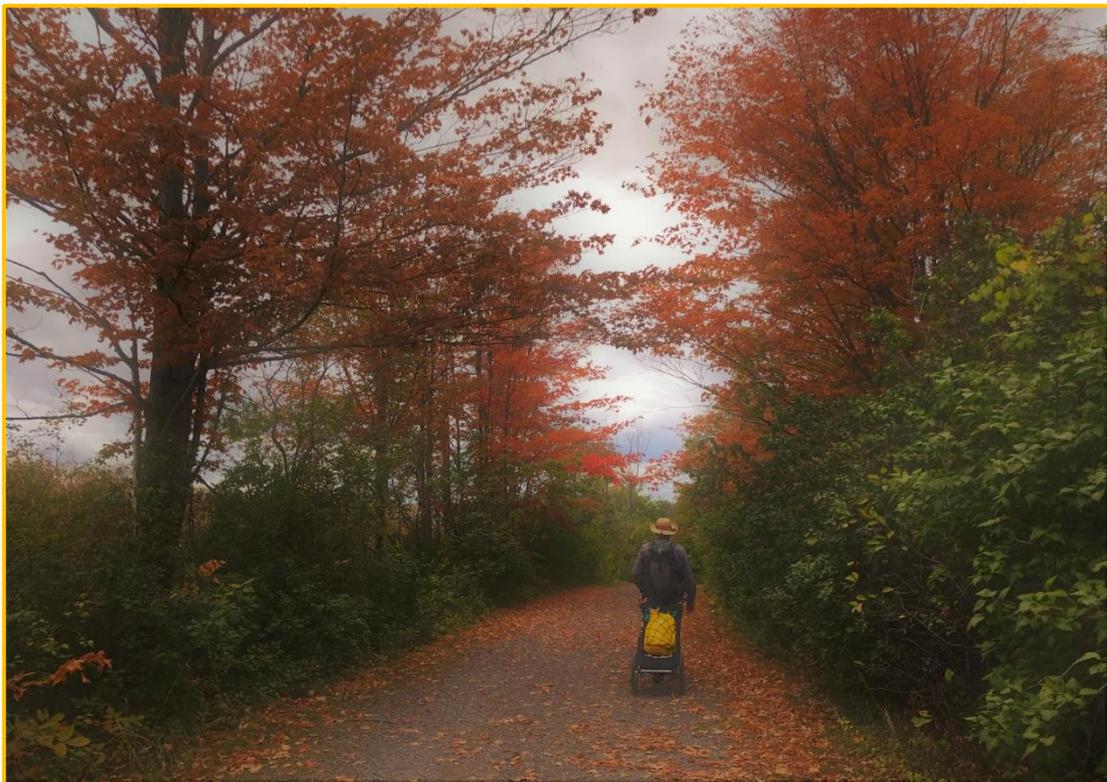
Kingston (day nineteen), we took a zero day (a day off). It is a steadfast rule of ours to rest for at least ten hours every day to recuperate and to take rest days when we feel the need. It felt wonderful to simply lay in bed and do nothing. What luxury!

Unfortunately, I got a phone call from the hospital; my dad had had a stroke. He was being kept for observation for a few days. Simon and I spoke of what we should do. After consultation with the hospital staff, we decided to speed our return. We decided to walk the Cataraqui Trail all the way to Chaffey's Lock where our friend, Brian, would pick us up. We made it in three long days (twenty, twenty-one, and twenty-two). We were glad to find our bed and enjoyed the modern luxuries of indoor plumbing.



Kingston City Hall

This getaway replenished our happiness tanks and gave me some calmness for the reality of caring for my elderly father. After a week, my father was well enough to be released from the hospital's care back to his residence. As for Simon and me, we are already dreaming of resuming our Trans Canada Trail project in the Prairies next spring.



The return home – fall is in the air and the colours are starting!