



START HERE

BLOG

DESTINATIONS

ADVENTURE

TRAVEL RESOURCES

WORKING HOLIDAYS

CANADA

## PADDLING THE TRENT SEVERN WATERWAY NEAR CAMPBELLFORD, ONTARIO

Ever looked at a lock system and wondered whether you can paddle through it in a canoe or kayak? Well, on the Trent Severn Waterway in Ontario, you can! We tried this out for ourselves on a recent visit to Campbellford in the Trent Hills region.

Used to paddling in remote areas with nothing but wilderness for company, we were surprised how fun it was to explore an urban area by canoe. Not only that but travelling through the locks turned out to be just as impressive an experience as I hoped. It was also surprisingly (and thankfully) easy!

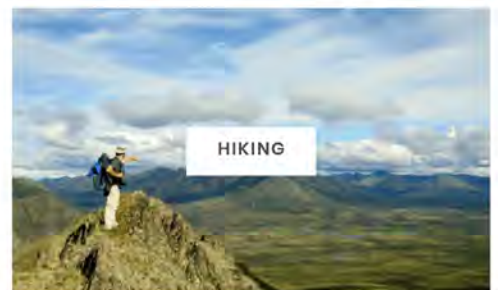


WELCOME TO OFF TRACK TRAVEL!



Hey there! We are Jean Robert and Gemma, a British-Canadian couple who love to explore beyond the beaten path by foot, road and paddle.

We love sharing these experiences to hopefully inspire and help others to do the same. Come join us on our adventures!





## THE TRENT SEVERN WATERWAY

The Trent Severn Waterway travels between Lake Ontario and Lake Huron’s Georgian Bay, comprising a remarkable 386km of linked rivers, lakes and canals. 45 heritage locks (plus two hydraulic lift locks) connect the different bodies of water and are operated by Parks Canada. The latter is looking to extend usage of the Waterway beyond traditional boaters to kayak and canoe paddlers over the next few years, with new lower landing platforms being installed and the introduction of [more waterside camping options](#).

The Trent Severn Waterway is part of the new [Champlain Route](#), based on Samuel de Champlain’s epic 1500km journey through Ontario in the 17th century.

## THE TRENT HILLS

With the Trent Severn Waterway running through so many different communities and regions, there are so many potential paddling and boating opportunities no matter where you go. Our adventure took us to Campbellford, an approachable small town straddling both sides of the Trent. It may only be a two-hour drive east from Toronto but Campbellford and the surrounding Trent Hills area feel like a world



**SUBSCRIBE**

Enter your email address below to subscribe to post updates (no spam, ever)

Your email address..

**SUBSCRIBE**

away.

Think rolling hills (almost too green to be true), endless farmland and friendly small towns dotted in between. A tractor on the main road here constitutes as heavy traffic. And yet, again, it is somehow so relatively close to Toronto.



## CAMPBELLFORD AND THE GIANT TOONIE

Before heading out onto the river, we made time to check out the giant toonie (two dollar coin) sitting in Campbellford's Mill Park. Built to recognise the local artist who designed the polar bear motif, statues such as these usually tend to stick out like a sore thumb, but somehow we managed to completely miss it while walking along the Trent! Apparently, the polar bear on the coin is called Churchill. Mandatory photos taken, it was time for a paddle.

Launching just a few streets away from downtown, we first headed back upriver to see Campbellford from the water. It's a popular place for boaters to stop over and I can see why. While the town does have an industrial edge (not helped by the amount of construction going on during our visit!), it is softened by the river, numerous heritage buildings and a walkable downtown area. The Trent itself is lined by trees that are sure to create a riot of colour in autumn.



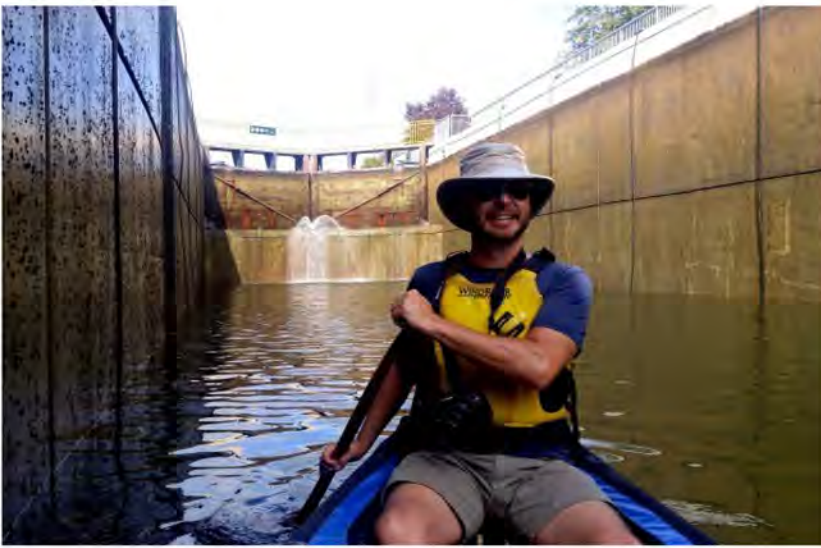
## PADDLING THROUGH A TRENT SEVERN WATERWAY LOCK

Only a short paddle downriver from Campbellford is Locks 11 and 12, a double flight lock that operates simultaneously to move both inbound and outbound boaters fourteen metres in height. It's a little intimidating to look at whether on land and water, but even more so from the seat of a canoe!

At the signal of the lockmaster, we paddled straight into the first lock and headed to the guidelines on the side. With the huge lock doors shut, all we had to do was loop our own rope (one at either end of the canoe) through the lines and hold on tight.

For such a big system, locks do work awfully fast. It only felt like minutes before the next set of doors opened and we were into the second section of the lock. Again, we held onto the guidelines while the water rushed out and finally brought us down to what would now be 'regular' water level. Paddling out of the lock, it was as if we had been transported much further into the countryside. We were now facing [Ferris Provincial Park](#).





## RANNEY GORGE FALLS AND SUSPENSION BRIDGE

Just tucked around the corner from Trent Severn Lock 11/12, is Ranney Gorge Suspension Bridge. Part of the Trans Canada Trail and one entrance to Ferris Provincial Park, this pedestrian bridge sits ten metres above the river and looks towards thundering Ranney Falls to the north. At almost one hundred metres across, it is a pretty impressive sight from below, especially when you see it sway back and forth just a little in the wind. We returned the next day to walk along it ourselves and follow the trail along the river to a lookout above the falls. I love getting dual perspectives of beautiful places. My only regret is seeing this area just prior to the fall colours coming in as I have no doubt it would be stunning.

Back on the river, we paddled towards the Ranney Falls a little to feel the force of the water before turning around and riding the current back under the bridge. We paddled downstream a kilometre or so to a private little picnic spot on the banks of the river.

With the 3.30pm closure time of the locks on our mind, we headed back towards Campbellford after lunch. Ascending the locks was just as simple (though apparently, it can be more turbulent) and before we knew it, we were at our take-out point. A taste of the urban and wild, all in one day!