

# Pedal, Paddle and Pause

## Cycling and kayaking in the 1000 Islands and Rideau Canal Waterway

By Diana Ballon

**Eastern Ontario lies north of New York State, in an area brimming with quaint heritage towns, lakes, canals and waterways. It is also home to the Rideau Canal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that extends 202 kilometres from Ottawa to Kingston, and is the oldest continuously operated canal in North America. The canal's 24 hand-operated locks link lakes and rivers, with so many waterways to discover.**

**On a recent visit, we explored this area from many different vantage points. We took a scenic flight with 1000 Islands Helicopter Tours, a cruise with Rockport 1000 Islands Boat Tours and did guided and self-guided kayaking and cycling day trips.**

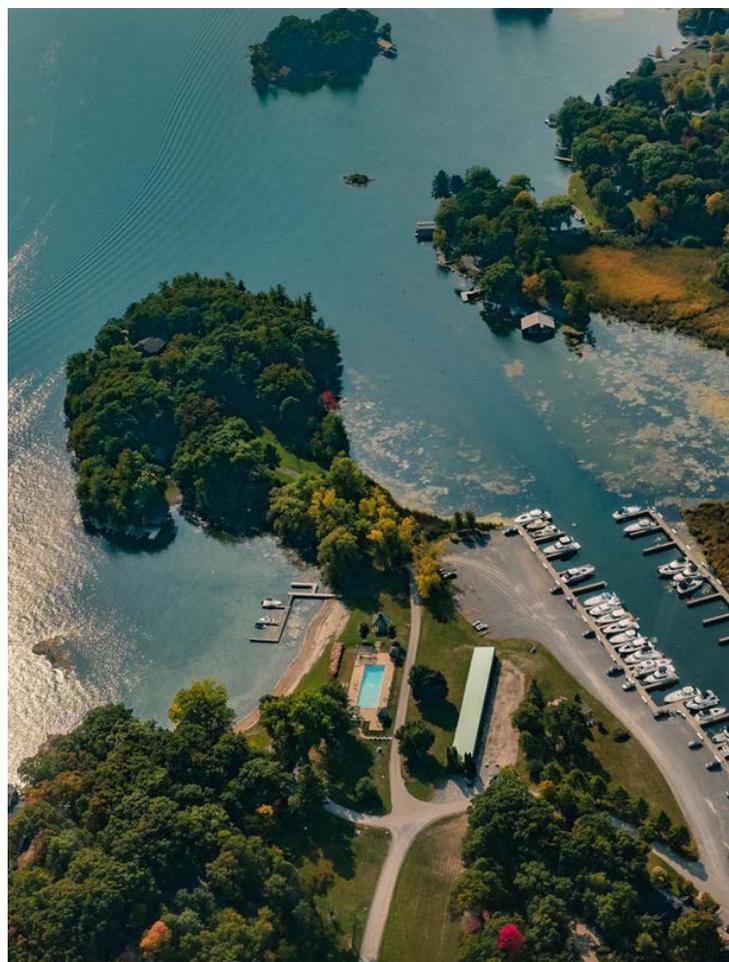
**If you enjoy exploring wilderness by boat and bike and staying in quaint heritage inns in charming towns that you may not have heard of but will want to return to, read on!**

### KAYAKING

On our first day, we did a full-day guided kayak tour through the 1000 Islands with expert guide David Frost of 1000 Islands Kayaking. Although we meandered close to 20 kilometres, we were probably never more than about three kilometres from Gananoque. Yet it felt like we had truly left civilization as the mainland disappeared from view.

The "1000" Islands are actually more than 1,800 islands spread over an 80-kilometre area that extends through both Canadian and U.S. waterways. We stopped to check out Gordon Island, one of about 20 islands available to the public with well-maintained walking trails, public docks and campgrounds. Gordon Island is also one of two islands that has oTentiks, which are a cross between a cabin and a rustic tent—so not hardcore camping, but not glamping either. There are also oTentiks on Mallorytown Landing on the mainland, but check the Parks Canada website on availability during Covid.

Another day, with laminated maps affixed to the bow of our kayaks and our lunch boxes and bathing suits stored underneath, my husband and I headed out from The Opinicon by Chaffey's Lock to Stirling Lodge about 10 kilometres away. With clearly numbered signs along our route, we easily weaved our way through Clear Lake to Newboro Lake and then followed along the shore until we passed the lock in Newboro and arrived at our destination. We then pulled our kayaks up onto the shore, literally only a few metres from our magical Pump House cottage at Stirling Lodge—with a cozy bedroom, a deck to have a drink on and a modern bathroom to ourselves.



### CYCLING

Our third day, we cycled 20 kilometres along a paved bike path that runs parallel to the 1000 Islands Parkway from Gananoque to Rockport. In just over an hour, we were rewarded to discover the pretty historic village of Rockport, which has a general store, two waterside restaurants (we had a delicious lunch at Cornwall's Pub) and the Rockport Cruises ferry docks next door. So we could eat our meal, and then literally get on a boat for our cruise right after.

Although we just went as far as Rockport, you can continue cycling along the 1000 Islands Parkway to Skywood Eco Adventure zipline courses in Mallorytown.

The Parks of the St. Lawrence also operates gravel and paved bike paths between Morrisburg

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Clyde Hall



At Chaffey's Lock



Rockport General Store

and Cornwall. The most scenic part of this trail is arguably The Long Sault Parkway, where you cycle along a shoulder of a 10-kilometre road that crosses causeways connecting 11 islands.

Another worthy cycling option is the Cataraqui Trail, which follows what was formerly a Canadian National Railway line. This gravel and dirt trail extends from Smiths Falls to Strathcona, and runs for 104 kilometres, with a particularly pretty section around Chaffey's Lock. Note that cyclists share the trail with people on foot and horseback.

### PAUSE

Eastern Ontario has many pretty villages and towns—Merrickville, Westport, Perth and Newboro among them. Here you will find heritage inns dating back to the

mid-and late-1800s, some of which began as fishing lodges, and all of which have maintained their historic charm. Picture wraparound porches, walls lined with old black and white photos, antique furniture, rolling lawns and views of the water.

The Gananoque Inn & Spa is a mainstay in the town of Gananoque, and a perfect base camp for day trips to the 1000 Islands and surrounding area. This waterfront hotel first opened its doors in 1896, and—with its signature green shutters—continues to be a landmark in this small town of 5,000 for dining and overnight stays.

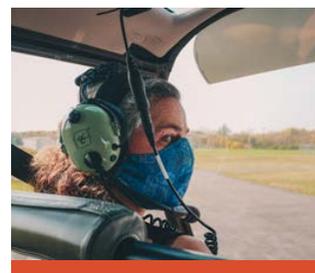
The Opinicon opened around 1896 as a rooming house, private fishing club and family resort.

Although not currently open as a lodge, you can still come here to dine on the banks of the Opinicon Lake, overlooking sprawling gardens with majestic lakeside views.

Newboro's Stirling Lodge, in the heart of the Rideau Lakes, is another charming heritage lodge with a range of accommodation options, from their Victorian manor house to a waterfront cottage, lakeview units and rooms in the main lodge. While you are there, wander into their "downtown" and check out Kilborn's on the Rideau, an old-style three-storey general store selling everything from shoes to scones. Also make time to visit the Newboro Lock.

Another worthy option is the 19th century Cove Country Inn in Westport, a pretty harbour town with shops, galleries and hiking at nearby Foley Mountain Conservation Area.

Finally, Perth has many great bed and breakfast options, including the award-winning Clyde Hall B & B in Lanark, which is 10 minutes away. Clyde Hall has an outdoor pool and hot tub, nature trails, kayaking and canoeing, as well as a golf course attached to the property. Accommodations consist of three individual suites as well as a three-bedroom family loft.



### IF YOU GO

**Rideau Tours, [rideautours.ca](http://rideautours.ca)** can tailor itineraries for an inn-to-inn experience. They also work in partnership with Ahoy Rentals, based in Kingston, to coordinate shuttle services. They can also organize luggage or vehicle transfers along with kayak, canoe and bike rentals.

**For a helicopter tour,** visit 1000 Islands Helicopter Tours [fly1000islands.ca](http://fly1000islands.ca).

For guided half-and full-day kayaking tours, or rentals for your own kayaking excursions, visit 1000 Islands Kayaking [1000islandskayaking.com](http://1000islandskayaking.com).

For a boat tour of the 1000 Islands, visit Rockport Cruises [rockportcruises.com](http://rockportcruises.com) or City Cruises Gananoque [cityexperiences.com](http://cityexperiences.com).