

Summer 2008 journey of Southern Ontario (August 17 - 26)

Sunday 8/17

We left Athens at around 8:30 am and arrived in Detroit six hours later. It took almost an hour to cross the border on the bridge to Canada. At passport control they accepted without problems our bike adventure as the purpose of our visit. We found quite easily the Windsor Inn On The River, the B&B in which we planned to stay that night. We did not call ahead of time and it was lucky that the friendly manager, Barbara, was at home at the time we arrived and was prepared to host us. We were quite tired when we arrived because Henry stayed with us the previous day until the afternoon and only then we started to get prepared for our tour; taking care of bikes, doing the washing, packing etc... In spite of that, after settling into our room which faced the Detroit river, we set off on our bikes to check the train station, to find out whether we could take our bikes without taking them apart etc...

We found out that we could send our bikes as they were only on the next 5:50 am train even if we wanted to get on the 10:05 train to London and that it would cost \$21 per bike. We could leave our car in the station parking for \$70 per week.



Monday 8/18

Instead we decided to leave the car in the B&B, come an hour early and pack our bikes in their duffle bags and take them with us as items of luggage. We saved at least \$115. It all worked very well. But like our situation in Ireland 8 years ago, we planned on taking too much luggage and ended leaving half of it in the car.

The train left punctually at 10:05. The train ride to London took about 2 hours and was very pleasant.

Not doing our homework properly, we thought that London is a tiny town. So we copied from the internet a page that showed us 7 red dots on the London map which marked B&B's, and we were sure that we would find them without problems and choose whichever we liked the best. In fact we had more luck than brains. London is a large city, and we were lucky that Issy spotted the bike path which wound along the river in a beautiful park which led to the beautiful B&B in which we stayed that night and which we found by chance because a person we met happened to know about it. In fact when we arrived at this B&B, Park View, no one answered the bell and we started to look for another one. Again we were lucky to see a person on her porch who knew where another B&B was and she directed us there. The hostess, Peggy, invited us into her house even though she had no room for us. But, she invited us for tea and cake and called for us. She happened to call Park View, which by then, its owners returned home and agreed to host us. This part of London was very beautiful with lovely houses surrounded by lovely gardens. Our hosts were gracious. We had an entire apartment in the basement, which had an exit to the garden and from there to the park, at our disposal. After settling down we went to the park for a walk and some exploration in anticipation of the next day's beginning of our bike ride back to Windsor along the northern shore of Lake Erie.

Tuesday 8/19

We set out at 8:30. Eileen, our Irish hostess, recommended a B&B in Leamington opposite her in-laws' house, which we used later when we arrived there. She offered to loan us fleeces and said we could return them to her inlaws. But we used our rain jackets which protected us very well against the chilly morning wind. The weather forecast was excellent for our entire trip and indeed we had no rain during the entire biking period. Some days were hotter than others, but we learned from GOBA to drink a lot and to avoid exhausting ourselves and this lesson served us very well. When we showed Peggy, the previous day our plan which required that we get out of London on Wellington Street which turns into route#36 which was supposed to take us south to a small town, St. Thomas, she nearly fainted, saying that it is a horrible street with heavy fast traffic which leads to one of the main freeways. According to her it was suicidal. She really scared us and we were trying to think of other streets that might lead us to #36. Soon after we left our B&B we reached the bike path along the river, which we explored the previous day. Soon after reaching the bike path we met a jogger who stopped us to ask about our unique bikes. BTW many stopped us for the

same purpose. Even people in cars overtook us and then waited for us to catch up with them so they could inquire about the bikes or after passing us from the opposite side turn around to overtake us and talk with us. In any case the jogger happened to also be a biker. He told us how to get to Wellington Str. and said that it is not as bad as one might think. He also suggested that we visit a small artsy town, Sparta and stay overnight in a quaint harbor town, Port Stanley. We entirely followed his suggestions and did not regret it.



There was a sidewalk along Wellington on which we rode and even the entrance to the freeway was arranged with sidewalks in a way that both bikes and pedestrians could handle the heavy loaded intersection. Sparta ended up being a small Quackers' town with nothing much, but there was a tea house where we sat on the patio and enjoyed cream tea which is tea and scones with preserve and cream just like I make at home. It was lovely. Around 10 miles later we arrived at the coastal town of Port Stanley, a lovely charming town with a river flowing into the lake with a charming yacht marina and a fishermen harbor in the mouth of the river. We decided to stay there an extra day. The jogger told us about the super French fries at Mackie's on the Beach and signs directed us there for tourist information. We decided to rent a room for two nights at the Beach Hotel. It seemed very convenient because it was on the ground floor actually on the ground level with the door to the public outside, which allowed us to keep our bikes inside. The room was perfect for us. After a quick supper which included

French fries of course on the beach of course, we quickly went to see a play which showed as part of the town theater festival. The play was called “Running Mates”. It was a romantic comedy written by a young woman who was born in Sparta who lives and works now in Toronto and who also acted in the main female role. It was interesting funny and well done. But we were totally exhausted by the end of the day.

Total bike miles: 40

Wednesday 8/20

We were in room #3 fast asleep when at around 3:00 am we were woken up by shouting and banging, loud music and laughing. I went out to explore the cause of the tumult and discovered that the guest in room #2 right next to us decided to party. Speaking to the partying party did not help exactly and there was no one around to help with the situation. The noise continued until 4:00. At breakfast time we complained and were promised that the case will be dealt with. Even the noisy neighbor saw us later, apologized and promised it would not happen again. He kept his promise. After breakfast we roamed the city. We found its supermarket, bakery, coffee houses, quaint shops, galleries, ice cream parlor beaches and secluded corners. We watched the large ships and sailing boats moving in and out of the harbor and a million seagulls. It turned out to be a lovely relaxing lay over day.



Thursday 8/21

Back on our bikes along Lake Erie towards a small town called Morpeth. The small shop at the intersection was like any gas station store with candy and a few other items. We were told that there was no B&B in the town. There were camping grounds on the shore. Cleverly we thought about such a situation and therefore schlepped with us a tent, mattresses and sleeping bags. That was the only night we needed that stuff, but it would be quite miserable not to have it. We camped at the Rondeau Shores camping ground which had a big section of year round inhabitants in trailers, seasonal trailer inhabitants and a small camp ground. We were the only campers. The campground was kept very well. The showers and toilets were clean and functioned well. They had a salt-water warmed swimming pool and steep stairs going down to a small beach. Luckily they had a store from which we bought a can of chili and three packets of chips, which we ate on the small beach. For dessert we had Bounty, chocolate covered coconut candy. We swam in the swimming pool, showered and fell asleep like drunken logs.

Total bike miles: 50



Friday 8/22

Before leaving the camping site, we called the B&B in Leamington and were happy that they had a room for us for two nights. Troy who spoke to me on the phone sounded very sweet and we were happy to have a bed to sleep on the next two nights. I think that we are somewhat passed camping.



We had only 50 miles, but we arrived at our hosts' house only at around 6:00 pm. They turned out to be lovely people. Their house was furnished and decorated in a period style. Their garden was beautiful and their breakfasts were sumptuous, prepared and cooked by Amy. They were very gracious and gave a lot of good advice. Troy is a paramedic by profession and so he is familiar with the roads and could direct us to the most convenient biking roads. We could use the lounge and watch TV or help ourselves to tea, coffee, cold drinks, power bars etc...
Total bike miles: 52

Saturday 8/23

After breakfast we rode to Point Pelee. It is a national park and nature reserve situated on a triangular stretch of land that extends 10 km into the lake. In places it contains wetlands which are absolutely beautiful and interesting to explore. We walked on a boardwalk on which we saw a bullfrog. It's fantastic to walk surrounded by bulrushes and other wetland plants. We saw vast areas of various types of water lilies. We climbed on a tower on which swallows built nests and saw openmouthed chicks waiting to be fed. The highlight of this tour was going

for an hour and a half with a young guide, a student of environmental science, in a canoe. It was fabulous. He showed us various plants and birds, explained to us various phenomena, like the spongy floaty stuff on which the bulrushes grow and under which creature strive. He took us to a field of lotus. It was amazing. we decided to stay an extra night and spend the next day in Pellee Island.

Total bike miles: 24



Sunday 8/24

We ate breakfast early to reach the 9:00 am ferry to the island. The harbor from which the ferry leaves is situated in a beautiful garden which includes also a large yacht marina. We noticed it on our way to Point Pellee the previous day. The ferry ride takes 90 minutes. We spent the entire day riding our bikes on the island. There is an old restored light house which is situated in the northern eastern tip of the island in a nature reserve. Being on bikes we could stop anywhere and watch anything that appeared curious. We saw dark and white egrets and again impressive wetlands and “jungles” of giant weeping willows and other trees and shrubs. We visited a winery and another nature reserve in the southern tip of the island. We thought of the possibility of returning there for a few days one day, but in spite of the pleasure of riding along the water and enjoying the sight of yet other marinas and nature reserves, there isn't much to do there and in spite of the fact that 240 people live there, there is only one coop

store which is quite empty and depressing. We heard later on from our hosts and also saw on the ferry that once a week a delegation of a few people comes by ferry to the main land with a list for all the island inhabitants to shop for groceries. We would rather try again Put-In-Bay. We might try it in the near future when we have a long weekend. It seems to be much livelier.

Total bike miles: 34



Monday 8/25

Troy directed us through route #50 the nearest road to the lake. Except for a puncture in Issy's back wheel, which was fixed in half an hour we had no other incidents. We had a head wind part of the way, but the weather was otherwise perfect. The road took us through many beautiful neighborhoods and the Grand Finale were the last 6 miles on the bike path along the Detroit river in a beautiful park in Windsor with the breathtaking panorama of the city Detroit on the other side of the river. We returned to our B&B in one piece. We were too tired to go out again and preferred to shower and get into bed from where we watched the first day of the Democratic Convention. It was emotional to listen to Teddy Kennedy speak and I was glad to be "introduced" to Michelle Obama. Who knows? She might be our next First Lady. I was impressed by her and I will not be sorry if it happens, even though Hillary Clinton was my candidate.

Total bike miles: 57



Tuesday 8/26

After breakfast we left back for Athens. The delay on the bridge to enter to the US, was much shorter than entering to Canada on Sunday, ten days previously. Maybe Sunday is not an ideal day to cross the border. We decided to check Port Clinton and Sandusky on the way home for future trips by ferry to Put-in-Bay. We

explored a little and hopefully we'll do it in the near future. As soon as we arrived in Athens it started to rain and it did not stop for 36 hours. How lucky!
Total bike miles for the entire trip: 257



There was some space on this page, so we added this last picture of sunset from the ferry that took us back to Leamington from the island.