

# A Cycle Tour Through The County

By Brooke Broadbent



Bent Fink-Jensen, above, arrived by train to meet author Brooke Broadbent for their bicycle sojourn into the County.

Lots of folks enjoy cycling – or at least the thought of cycling. A morning jaunt of a few kilometres on our bikes brings us alive, makes us feel younger, and helps to keep us trim and fit.

If five, 10 or 20 kilometres is good for what ails us, is a 200 kilometres bicycle tour even better? Yes. Most definitely! My friend Bent and

I are both ‘chesterfield athletes’ pushing 60, and we thoroughly enjoyed our four-day biking holiday in Prince Edward County in August of 2004.

If you would like to take a short, healthy, memorable and reasonably priced holiday, Prince Edward County boasts scenic back roads, fine B&B accommodation, interest-

ing people, 800 km of spectacular shoreline, fine food, a host of water activities and even an exotic animal sanctuary.

We met at the train station in Belleville in the early afternoon on a mid-August day. Bent arrived by train from Oakville (with fellow passenger, the area’s most famous son, the ‘Golden Jet’ Bobby Hull) and I

drove from Ottawa, alone.

On the first leg of our journey we averaged 22 kilometres an hour and in about two hours arrived at our first stop. Sahayoga is a B&B combined with a yoga retreat on 16 acres on Big Island near Demorestville. As was the case with all three B&Bs where we stayed, Sahayoga is in its first year of operation. Hosts Linda and Michael Cooper are open and energetic, eager to share experiences of life and to provide tranquility, wholesome vegetarian fare and frank, animated conversation. The 'Golden Jet' connection was again present, this time in the form of a bed from Bobby Hull's former cottage that Linda had pounced on at an auction.

Day Two led us to Picton for our first of two stops at the Pastry Shop and on to Waupoos where we had a generous portion of blackened catfish served in the elegant surroundings of the Waupoos Estates Winery.

Throughout the trip we were expending considerable energy cycling, and consequently we ate high protein meals – and also high calorie desserts. In every restaurant we asked the staff what they preferred on the menu. They eagerly responded and we followed their suggestions all through the trip. Our tastebuds were pleased with this method of selecting our food. As well, our hearts felt a high level of connection with the warm people we met in this way.

Day Two winds were less favourable than the first day, and at times it was quite breezy along the lake, as we traveled some 50 km, arriving at our next hosts by three o'clock with windburned faces and in need of a warm shower.

The Shanti B&B and Yoga Retreat is located in a tastefully refurbished century-old farmhouse. Hosts Darin and Wendy Madore worked in Japan for several years and from that period have amassed an eclectic collection of elegant Asian artifacts. The large farmhouse rooms showcase the warm teak furniture, Buddhism-inspired icons and



Brooke, above, ponders the expanse of the Bay of Quinte, one of the many local sites they encountered on their tour.



vibrant Japanese silks. We shared our delicious and abundant meals with our hosts and a young couple who were enjoying their two-day yoga retreat.

In the yoga studios at Shanti and Saya we felt the perceptible calm and pleasant aliveness washing through the rooms – the same aliveness and warm energy imbued all our interactions with Darin and Wendy.

Day Three was the most ambitious. We pedalled close to 80 km. Bent had carefully studied the maps, and he had planned a ride that could vary from 50 to 80 km. Although the wind was often against us as we headed west and south, when we had a choice of taking a shorter route, we always chose the longer route. That way we visited the remarkable Lake on the Mountain, the Pastry Shop (again), Sandbanks Provincial Park and Angeline's Bloomfield Inn & Spa for tea and cake.

By now our average speed was down from 20 km to 18. Hills played a role in slowing us down. You might think of Prince Edward County as being flat, but when you're on a bicycle you quickly realize there are several steep hills and long slow-rising inclines.

As we stood at the Lake on the Mountain comparing our elevation to the level of the shipping lane below, we realized that we had ascended 60 metres that morning. By now I was feeling in the groove. This was my first cycling tour – preparation was minimal and I started out concerned about my ability to finish, especially with my heavy mountain bike.

Bent had recently completed a 300-km bicycle excursion in his native Denmark so he was confident in his ability. As well, Bent had a

lightweight touring bike. We worked as a team to complete our 80 kilometres, with Bent often breaking the wind for me riding in his slipstream, like hulking tractor trailers a few kilometres north on the 401.

We were clearly accomplishing our personal objectives of experiencing the County, developing our friendship and exercising. We were tired and energized at the same time. After a day's ride we often had an hour's good rest; at night however, our bodies and minds were juiced up and we had difficulty sleeping soundly. During the day we



laughed lots, rested about every 15 km and drank lots of fluids – the non-alcoholic kind. One day of cycling seemed like two days, as we saw plenty of sights, enjoyed the fresh air, took pictures of water scenery and just kept pedalling. We met a few always-smiling cyclists, kind B&B owners, pleasant fellow guests and eager-to-please restaurant staff, and everywhere the people were friendly.

We spent our third night at the newly-renovated Wellington Willows where host Ron Waterson provided elegant quarters. On other nights we had slept in separate rooms. This night we had a large suite with a sitting room and double beds, and saved ourselves a few dollars. Ron made reservations for us at the Devonshire Restaurant where we enjoyed the view of the lake and fine food. It was nice to splurge

once for a meal but it did cost more than we paid for supper at our B&B establishments.

In the end this was, to quote Lance Armstrong, “not about the bike,” but about life quality – staying active, having new experiences, and deepening relationships. It might seem like a big challenge to cycle 200 kms. In fact we spent less than 12 hours sitting on a bicycle seat, spread over a period of four days. We think of those four days as a huge opportunity to connect with nature, other people and ourselves.

Our trip was a great success. Here are a few tips that we can pass

along for anyone else considering a similar undertaking.

1. Do it. You will have a wonderful experience.
2. Build up your cycling stamina by making a few 30-km trips before embarking on a trip like we made.
3. Don't go alone.
4. Prepare in advance by collecting tourist information and essential tools such as maps

- and a compass.
5. Eat well, and don't be afraid to eat carbohydrates – you need them for cycling.
6. Ride on less-traveled country roads.
7. Take breaks every 15 kms or so and don't get hung up on your destination. Enjoy the journey.
8. Take along your autograph book – you might meet the affable Bobby Hull!

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