

Travel Log - Quebec

29-06-2015

Not without trepidation and a spoon full of apprehension on my part, we are readying to hit the road for a month to explore and experience Eastern Canada. Of all the places in the world, and we travelled to some 60 odd countries on all seven continents, Eastern Canada (Eastern Quebec and the Maritime provinces) is one destination we skipped. It has been on our bucket list for a while, but one full month on the road with our 11 year old, 200K plus kilometres clunker of a car, you must admit, is a daring feat. But travel has always been our best time together and the latest semi-retirement funk needs some airing. So off we go on Thursday July 2, 2015. We'll fill you in as we go. Stay tuned.

30-06-2015

There is some good news and some bad news. First the good news: \$118 later after a "road fit" inspection the mechanic warned me to not take the clunker on the road. Now the better news: I get to drive a brand new Budget Rent-a-Car. Still moody (no pun intended) but ready to rumble.



02-07-2015

We're off to a flying start. The 401 from Leslie to the Quebec border and beyond was virtually traffic free, which for a Toronto resident is absolutely euphoric. At the legal speed limit of 100 km/hour give or take 40% (OK –give only) we arrived at our destination: the village of Bromont, QC a good one hour ahead of plan. This was a joyful drive and to celebrate it we headed almost immediately to one of the top wineries in the townships for a wine tasting tour. Wine tasting is actually a pre-sales activity to buying Quebec wine. So we are bringing back 2 bottles of Quebec Chardonnay and Rose.



I bet that few wine connoisseurs tasted Quebec wine which according to the wine server is “under rated. That is to say it is there as good as any and not better than many, but what do we know? The village of Bromont is an upgraded version of Niagara-On-The-Lake: quaint, historical homes from the mid 1800’s now turned boutiques, bistros and galleries.



We sipped on Café O’ Lait and a rhubarb tart that mom claims is by no means better than hers and in my opinion just as good. We just returned to our B&B (a nice tiny clean room on a second floor of what used to be a barn and now owned by a nice young (fully bi-lingual) couple and their 16 year old baby girl Madeleine). We’re off to a good start.

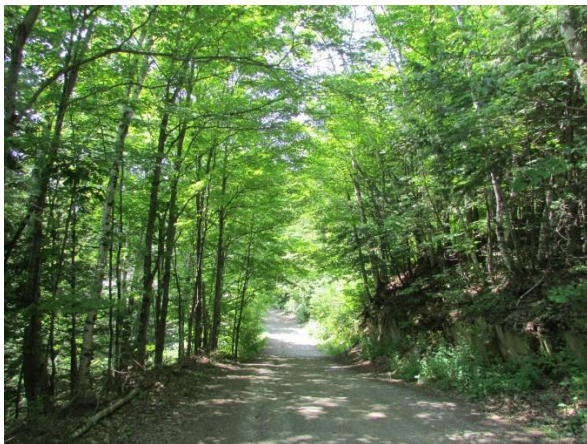


03-07-2015

Today can best be described as Freedom 72. Imagine you get up in the morning, have a fabulous home-made breakfast at the B&B and head out to follow the Townships Trail. This is a 418 (!) Kilometers scenic drive through the Eastern Townships, towns, villages and hamlets. You don't have to be anywhere at any particular time, you can stop anywhere if you wish to and drive through if you don't. There is no set arrival time, the roads are excellent with little to no traffic and the scenery is magnificent. It is quite relaxing and the feeling is one of total freedom. If Quebec were to ever separate from Canada, it will take with it one of the most beautiful pieces of land we Canadian own. The photos will speak for themselves.



The Eastern Townships are one huge cottage country, may be as beautiful as Ontario's but we would never know, being city dwellers ourselves. In Magog we discovered of all the places we ever visited the closest thing to an Israeli Ice Café' which contrary to the term is Ice Cream dunked in a tall glass of coffee – delicious.



Our team of pilot (driver) and Navigator is actually working better than ever. No screaming and yelling and “re-calculating” our route. Mom swears by the spread out paper map but will not trust Google's

maps and GPS. Somehow the iPhone goes dark every time she touches it which is proof positive that modern technology is a hoax.



Today for mom is also a learning experience: some people actually stay in dive motels where the number of stars is basically what you see at night outside your parking lot deluxe room window. This will cost us likely a gourmet dinner at an official "Creative Chefs" French cuisine establishment in Sherbrooke where we are now staying at the Hotel (Motel) de Jardine overlooking the Honda dealership in the outskirts of Sherbrooke's industrial section. But on the bright side it is clean and cost only \$100 a night. Mom is a trooper and has no problem lowering her lodging standards. We cancelled the second night though.



04-07-2015

Today can best be described as couci-couça or (for the English reader) Mezza – Mezza. It could have been a fantastic day had it been bright and sunny with a cool breeze. Instead it was a cloudy, warm and humid day a combination that attracts millions of « barchashim » (a Hebrew or rather an Arabic word for a bug which is a mutation of a miniature fly and a mousquito) to high elevations where we spent a good part of the day,

We also had a navigational error where we spent a little over an hour driving to Nowhere instead of following the map to Somewhere. In her defense the navigator attributed the error to the intensive (sorry, exclusive) use of the French language and the less than adequate road signs in Quebec. An argument which is hard to deny and will likely be accepted by a sober judge. I plan to use it thogh as political capital to when I make the next stupid mistake which is virtually guaranteed to occur at least once every 24 hours.

Today we « did » the Summit Trail a couple of hundreds of kilometers in the Eastern Townships hugging this region of the Quebec's mountain range. The views were fantastic and to be truly appreciated would require a professional camera which we did not have. The Lac Megantic National Park and the Granit House are two places we remember fondly although in both places we were subject to a vicious « barchashim » attack.

Two days later – look what happened



We actually drove through the town of Lac Megantic where the rail derailment tragedy occurred in the middle of town that killed 47 people. Driving the (excellent) roads was almost a pleasure for those who like to drive. The roads were clear of traffic, straight, and fast. The countryside is beautiful, lush and green and the villages quaint and quiet. As we understand it the holiday period in Quebec does not really start until later in July so we had the roads for ourselves. We also discovered a few things we did not know about the Townships : First it is biker's heaven and none of the bikers we saw or met were « Hell Angels » Second, a popular vehicle we have never seen before anywhere. A 3 wheel motorcycle with two front wheels and one rear wheel. Looks like a toy car on steroids. We also found out that one of the main industries in this part of Quebec is growing and selling Christmas trees which actually makes perfect sense in mostly Catholic Quebec.



Today we crossed the 1000 kilometers since we left home. At this rate I am obligated to issue a « Buy » recommendation for Budget-Rent_A-Car stock as only the first 3000 kilometers are « free ».

We arrived back in Sherbrooke around 6 PM to our B&B. What a difference compared to last night. The decor is as 19th century French as you can imagine, or as mom described it as an upscale French bordelo. Having lived in Paris for sometime it would be hard to argue with her, but what do I know ? I'll tell you more tomorrow.





05-07-2015

We started the day with a sumptuous exquisite homemade genuine French breakfast as befitting an establishment of this repute. We left Sherbrooke only to return for a late lunch at the Bistro Bla Bla (real name) where we had a Bla Bla Pizza (literally). Today we headed to Coaticook (real name) where we finally found something unique in the Parc de Gorge. Not that the other townships and summits are anything but beautiful as much as we are probably a bit jaded. We find the green shades of the countryside and the many lakes are somewhat of a "been there done that". We could not get tickets to the Lumina Foresta last night. This is a light and sound show inside a forest and a major tourist attraction, but we all could watch it on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlMcZtSUiFo>

We went instead on a 4 kilometers hike inside the forest. We went down to the cave, onto the gorge up a 128 stairs tower and across the largest (in the world {?} or may be in North America) suspension bridge. The hiking trail by comparison to the climbing and hiking we did in the Himalayans just two years ago would be considered below average difficulty. Yet we both were huffing and puffing with our age,

weight and fitness level on full display. Mom still has Angle's Falls in Venezuela on her bucket list and we agreed to do that on her 75th birthday on condition that by then we will both loose between 25-30 pounds each and as fit as our old bones would allow.



The drive to Quebec City was fast and straight forward until the iPhone went dead and on restart Google Maps could not be restarted to find our way to the hotel. This is another proof positive that dependency

on technology may be at your peril. 90 minutes after arriving in the city and a few tension filled exchanges between driver and navigator we relaxed over a wonderful and not so expensive dinner a few doors from our hotel. Lights out.

06-07-2015

We are staying in Quebec City at the Saint Pierre in the lower city on the recommendation of my cousin Josh. Good choice. Lovely cobblestone narrow streets full of bistros, galleries and boutiques. Remind you of Paris of course. Food and fashion in QC are exquisite.

Our first walk today was to the Hospital within a walking distance of the Hotel. Mom has to have her stitches removed from her middle finger so it can function again for its designated purpose. However mom's right eye is virtually closed and puffy the result of the heretofore Barchasim attack of two days ago. So we're going for the double. All is good- mom is out. Notice the name on the Hospital card.



On the registration form mom by mistake answered No to the question: are you happily married? We will likely never live in QC as to get to the hospital we had to walk up a steep hill to the upper city which almost justified going to the emergency on its own merit. We couldn't understand why a nice person who directed us to the hospital suggested we either make the 5 minute walk or take the bus until we did.

We walked by the grand rail station and I mean grand:



Quebec City has true unmistakable charm and character. You feel like you have been transferred to Europe and more specifically France: Architecture, galleries, iconic historical buildings, pedestrian allies, buskers and bistros, bistros, bistros.







We are into waterfalls for one reason or another. We're yet to go to Angle Falls but we've been to Niagara Falls, Iguassu from both Argentina and Brasil points of view and Victoria Falls. It drew us to the water falls near Quebec City. Higher than Niagara Falls as advertised – Yes but only a sliver of its width. Nevertheless, it is thrilling to watch nature act in mysterious ways.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5PYR>



For many years I have asked myself this question but was never curious enough to research the answer: Why are so many innovations in 3D, CGI, animation, documentaries and film originate in Quebec. The Museum of Civilization delivered the answer. You must see it. We thought going in that we will learn

about the history of Quebec civilization. Instead we were mesmerized by the displays of the origins of animation, documentaries and films as well as interpretive dance.



Quebecers pioneered these arts, won world-wide acclaim and awards including an Oscar. I thought that French flair and its liberal arts and culture were behind it. Therefore we were surprised to see names like Larkin and McLean, clearly Anglophone names among the Quebec luminaries in these art forms.

The Museum is 20 meters across the hotel, but 10 meters next to it is a fashion boutique with amazing designs. As you can see Mom modelled at least 3 of them and guess which one we (this time) both agreed on.



As you can see, Mom still looks Aboriginal (no offence intended toward either) She is taking her medication regularly but the inflammation is not responding as fast.

As avid comfort seekers we are spending the night at the Comfort Inn in Edmundson, New Brunswick. It is one of those places where you have to have a good reason to go to. Ours was to break the 6 hour drive to Saint-John in half.