

## A view from the other side

### A Canadian heads across the border for a different take on the Falls

Waterloo Region Record

By Anne Bokma

Who has a better view of Niagara Falls — Canadians hands down. The width of Canada's Horseshoe Falls Veil Falls combined, but its curvy brink gives it a full-f linear U.S. counterparts.

And because the Falls actually face Canada, we get a stick their necks out for an unobstructed view of the h observation tower, a man-made structure that extends million tourists to the Falls, compared to the U.S.'s eig

Even the New York Times has called the American Falls the thundering waters.

When it comes to the superiority of our side of the Falls spirit of true Canadian humility, marked by our nation's fair and balanced and possible, I made a trek across

I discover some pleasant surprises. For one thing, the State Park, making it much less commercial than the carnival atmosphere of Clinton Hill. For another, it's got uniquely named features such as Goat Island, the land mass between the Bridal Veil and Horseshoe Falls, named for an early pioneer who kept a herd of goats in the area.

You can hop on a trolley to get around Goat Island and get off at Terrapin Point, an observation area that overlooks the falls and the lower Niagara Gorge, as well as the Three Sisters Islands, named after the daughters of an American commander of the War of 1812. These tiny peaceful enclaves are connected by a series of footbridges and contrast with the rushing intensity of the nearby Niagara River rapids that hurl themselves toward the edge of the falls. You can get much closer to the river's edge here than you can on the Canadian side.

Both the U.S. and Canada offer boat tours in the basin of the Falls. The U.S. Maid of the Mist boats are smaller and older, albeit more romantically named, than the swank new Hornblower cruise boats that were recently introduced in Canada. The Maid of the Mist operates half-hour rides until Nov. 8 and the \$17 US ticket gives you great bang for your buck, as it motors right to the base of the Horseshoe Falls where the surround sound of 600,000 gallons of



**Pedestrian sign to USA**

photo by anne bokma

A sign marks the way to the pedestrian budge leading from Niagara Falls, Ontario to Niagara Falls, New York.

cascading water will pound in your ears and your chest. The flimsy blue poncho you're handed won't prevent you from getting wet — you'll emerge from the experience feeling newly baptized by the ever-present mist.

Both sides of the Falls also offer a chance to look up at the wild cascades from below. In Canada's Journey Behind the Falls, visitors descend 150 feet by elevator to an observation deck where they can stand next to the thundering downpour. The U.S. Cave of the Winds attraction drops you 175 feet via elevator and you descend further on a series of boardwalks and stairs, getting soaked in a tropical storm atmosphere just a few feet from the billowing torrents at the base of the Bridal Veil Falls. Visitors are given specially designed sandals (yes, you can keep them) but you do need to be sure-footed since the wooden walkways, which are torn down and rebuilt every year, can be slippery and you can find yourself ankle deep in water.

In the summer months there are 90-minute wait times for Cave of the Winds. In early October we breeze on through.

Late fall is a great time to visit — the crowds have dwindled just as splendour of the foliage has burst into full glory, making for scenic drives through nearby Niagara County once you've finished marvelling at the Falls.

There are plenty of interesting places to stop along the way, including historic sites on the Freedom Trail that were used as hiding places in the Underground Railroad movement. One of these, the 65-acre Murphy's Orchards apple farm in Burt, is now the site of a successful wholesale jam and jelly business but was once a way station for runaway slaves who stayed in a secret room below the barn before escaping concealed in farm wagons travelling across the border.

We're reminded once again of Canada's reputation as a land of refuge after a stop at the Kenan Centre in Lockport where a group of Vietnam veterans has assembled an impactful display of hundreds of their own photos taken during their wartime in Southeast Asia. (Some 40,000 American war resisters would make the journey into Canada to evade the draft.)

From Lockport we circle back to Youngstown for a stop at Old Fort Niagara, which brings to life the early years of the Niagara Frontier. We along the picturesque parkway that borders the Niagara River to Lewiston where we dine at Carmelo, winner of the Best of Western New York's 'Most Romantic Dining' award, treating ourselves to succulent grilled swordfish and a heavenly, heaping bowl of lumache pasta with gulf shrimp, vodka sauce, and parsley-pignole pesto.

After settling in for the night at the historic 38-room Giacomo hotel, a renovated art deco office building back in Niagara Falls, NY, we decide on a final Falls adventure in the morning and cross the 440 metre Rainbow Bridge on foot, passports in hand, for a walk on the Canadian side.

It takes all of 10 minutes — and a 50-cent toll collection — to stroll from one country into another. The Niagara River flows beneath us and we are rewarded with a panoramic display of both the Canadian and American Falls. Suddenly the border seems irrelevant — the water falls for everyone, and, whatever side you're on, everyone falls for it.

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