

Manitoulin's "New" Cup and Saucer Trail

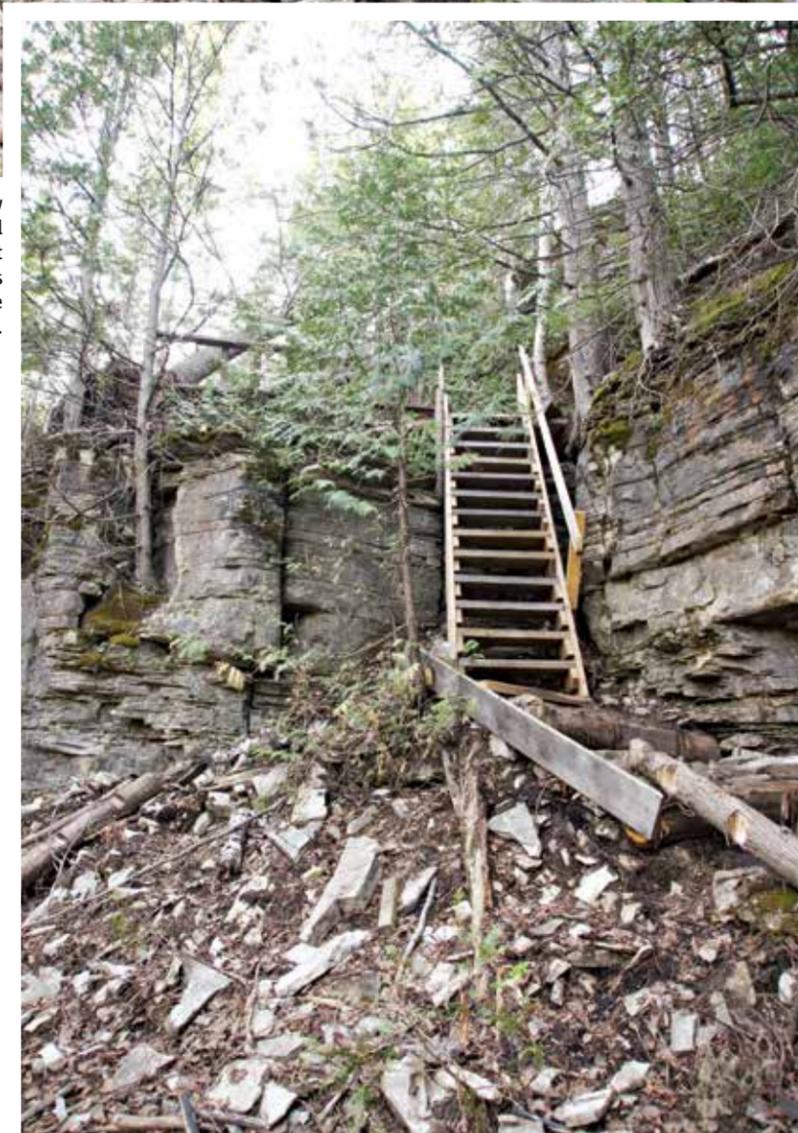
The Cup and Saucer Trail is the highest point on Manitoulin Island and could be the highlight of any visit to the island for those who can make a challenging hike. The views from this part of the Niagara Escarpment have to be seen to be believed. Last year Mike Davis went for a walk on it with his camera.

▲ Nothing but wilderness seems to spread out before you from the high part of the "cup" of The Cup and Saucer Trail. In the centre is a ridge called the Saucer. This view looks toward M'Chigeeng First Nation and the water of West Bay, part of the North Channel. On the horizon is Billings.



▲ This way up: the new “ship’s ladder” or basic staircase offers a relatively easy climb to the top of the first cliff.

► Steep cliffs at the new entrance to the trail required a structure to let people get to the top. This feature is thought to be fairly dog friendly.



Readers of this magazine will know that The Cup and Saucer Trail was briefly closed to the public in May 2017 until Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (EBC), which owns some of the land at the trail, offered a new access point to it from a bit further west on Hwy. 540 than the original entrance.

As Bob Barnett of EBC explained in his Autumn 2017 column in this magazine, the Town of Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands (NEMI) “agreed to allow parking right by the Town’s boundary road allowance with Billings.” A new parking lot was swiftly approved and

built in a few days. A new access to the trail had to be cleared and a wooden ladder was constructed to provide an easier way to get to the top of a large rock outcrop. Only three weeks after the trail had been closed, the trail with its new entrance features was reopened.

The reason that the different parties acted so quickly is because The Cup and Saucer Trail is regarded as “the fourth most important tourist attraction in northern Ontario and perhaps top of the bill for Manitoulin,” wrote Bob.

Some people are not aware that the Niagara Escarpment continues

► This sign near the parking lot maps out the trails on the Cup and Saucer.



► The Indigenous legend about this land formation is recorded on this sign on site. An Anishinaabe trickster is said to have created the formation by dropping his giant spearhead and handle. The spearhead became the lower bluff and the spear handle formed the high bluff.

▼ The dramatic beauty of the Cup and Saucer Trail shows why it is one of the top attractions in northern Ontario. More than 10,000 people use the trail each summer.



HOW TO GET HERE

From Little Current, go west on Hwy. 540 for roughly 20 km, just past Bidwell Road. A little further on Hwy. 540 is the new parking lot and trailhead on the east side of the highway.



▲ Sheer cliffs of the Niagara Escarpment rise up dramatically from the “saucer” land formation to suggest the higher “cup” portion.

from Tobermory, where the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and the Bruce Trail ends, and continues underwater, re-emerging on Manitoulin Island. While the whole island is actually part of the Escarpment, the characteristic cliffs are most dramatic on the Cup and Saucer Trail.

The trail is 12 km long, begins on EBC-owned land and continues on private

property owned by Meredith Chandler and Randy Noble. The land formation is made of ancient Silurian deposits with a hard dolostone cap and is called Cup and Saucer because the high land, or “Cup,” is located on a bigger, lower feature called the “Saucer.” The trail is steep in parts and winds through a mixed deciduous forest.

First Nations people have

a story about the formation of these lands, which they saw as a giant handle and spearhead with serrated edges for hunting fish. The story tells that the weapon was dropped by a giant mythical figure called Nenabozhoo, the Anishinaabe trickster. The main elements of the tale are recorded on a sign on the trail.

Be prepared for a hike of



▲ Thriving in the cracks of rocks are these delicate Bracken Ferns.

◀ The well-marked main trail passes interesting rock features such as these limestone/dolostone outcroppings.

▼ This section of the trail is an easy walk through a deciduous forest.

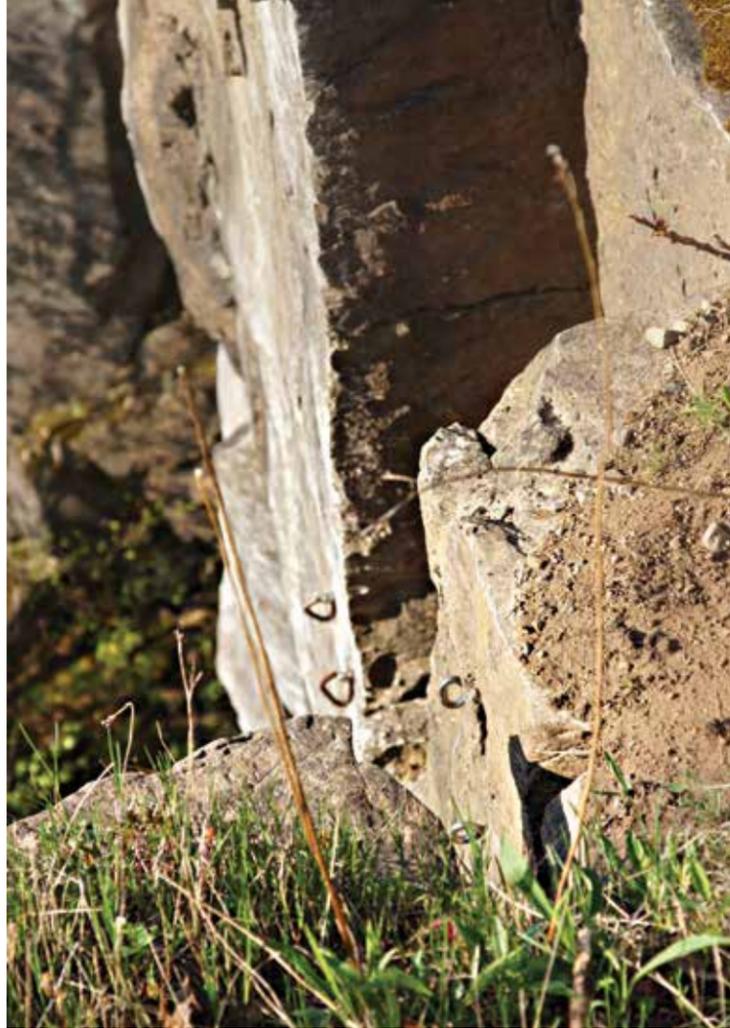


MANITOULIN ISLAND FAST FACTS

- ✓ The largest freshwater island in the world
- ✓ 2,766 sq. km in size
- ✓ There are 108 freshwater lakes on the Island
- ✓ "Manitoulin" means spirit
- ✓ Population of 12,000 permanent residents
- ✓ Highest point is on Cup and Saucer Trail, at an elevation of 1,155 ft.
- ✓ Cup and Saucer Trail is 12 km long

a few hours. When you reach the breathtaking highest part of the Cup, be careful at the sheer edge, but take time to savour the view. You will not only be on top of the trail, you will be on the highest point of all of Manitoulin Island, the largest freshwater island in the world.

To contribute funds for the maintenance of this trail and the protection of other lands on the Niagara Escarpment, send your cheque to Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy, 503 Davenport Road, Toronto ON, M4V 1B8 or call 888.815.9575. **NEV**



▲ Previously installed rock-climbing anchors can be seen along the cliff face.



▲ The Cup formation is topped with hard dolostone.



▲ Not for the faint of heart: on the Blue Trail at the start of the loop is the Adventure Trail, a more strenuous section with a cave! This route below Saucer level is challenging and requires children to be watched carefully, according to Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy.



▲ Red dots mark the main trail along inviting Escarpment features. Different coloured markers define the other trails.

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Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy

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