



Savouring the Apple Pie Trail

■ BY SANDRA J. HOWE

THE FRAGRANCE OF FRESH-FROM-THE-OVEN APPLE PIE washes over you as you enter the store. The shelves are stocked with hand-crafted preserves. Juicy red apples are displayed for sampling. Your mouth waters, and your memory carries you back in time to grandma's farm. Welcome to Grandma Lambe's in Meaford! This old-fashioned country market has provided fresh, local apples from their own orchard for over 50 years. For a modern twist, they prepare gluten-free and diabetic baked goods as well as traditional favourites. And don't miss enjoying scooped ice cream in the comforting shade of an apple tree. ►



Autumn view on road descending steeply from Old Baldy Lookout to Beaver Valley Rd. 13 near Kimberley.
PHOTO BY SANDRA J. HOWE.



The moderating effects of Georgian Bay and the Niagara Escarpment create the perfect microclimates for producing delicious, abundant apples.

◀ Apples grow well here due to the moderating effects of the Niagara Escarpment and Georgian Bay. Beaver Valley's Farmer's Pantry has luscious pick-your-own apples. PHOTO BY SANDRA J. HOWE.



◀ Grandma Lambe's grows a wide variety of apples. Spy and Cortland last well through winter. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.



▲ Ravenna Country Market has delicious light meals and more. PHOTO BY DOUG EDWARDS.

Grandma Lambe's is one of the 37 delightful and delectable stops along the Blue Mountains Apple Pie Trail. Winner of the 2012 Ontario Tourism Culinary Experience Award, this unique culinary adventure helps you explore all things apple. Applewood art, baked goods, harvest celebrations, apple wines and ciders, cooking classes, delicious meals, apple-growing history, pick-your-own orchards; you can find it all as you drive these winding country roads. Along the way are great opportunities for hiking, biking, and paddling, too.

Grey County is Ontario's largest apple growing region. The moderating effects of Georgian Bay and the Niagara Escarpment create the perfect microclimates for producing

delicious, abundant apples. The Apple Pie Trail takes you meandering through Collingwood, the Blue Mountains, Meaford, and the beautiful Beaver Valley with stops for all tastes and interests along the way. While the trail provides year-round adventures, autumn is a great season to head out exploring Apple Country.

The ideal beginning for your tour is Scenic Caves Nature Adventures. Climb to the summit of the Niagara Escarpment for spectacular fall colour views and photos. The Georgian Bay shoreline and islands, the townsite of Collingwood, and the slopes and forests of the Blue Mountains are spread out below you. Exploring the caves, crevices, and cultural

history of this fascinating area will whet your appetite for further apple adventures. For a bird's-eye view, try the Thunderbird Twin Zip Line.

Within Collingwood are 11 trail stops full of interesting and tasty apple options. Grey Heron Yarn Shop, which was on the tour last year, featured apple-inspired hand-dyed sock yarn kits for crafty people. Karen Farmilo loves to share her passion for knitting, and a stop at her shop invites you into her enthusiasm. Karen sells beautiful yarns with apple names such as Red Prince, MacIntosh, and Golden Ginger, and hand-crafted applewood buttons made locally from pruned orchard wood.

From Collingwood, you can follow the Apple Pie Trail to Blue Mountain Village for

excellent shopping, dining, and outdoor adventure experiences. Ride the gondola to the summit, pedal boat on the pond, try mini-golf, or take a mountaintop segway tour; these tours and more are available through Activity Central at Blue Mountain Resort. Don't miss the old-fashioned caramel apples at Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory!

Spectacular Scenery

For a wonderful, rural experience, head over the mountain on Grey Rd.19/119 to Ravenna. Ravenna Country Market features a superb curried apple, carrot and ginger soup. Their baking is also divine. Local artwork, preserves, skincare products, handicrafts, and frozen entrees



▲ Part of the delight of visiting Grandma Lambe's is exploring the displays, fun signs and fixtures. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.



▲ Grey Heron yarn the colours of apples. PHOTO BY DOUG EDWARDS.



▲ Jellies and jams from Grandma Lambe's. PHOTO BY SANDRA J. HOWE.



▲ Grandma Lambe's home-baked pies tempt you from the front door. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.

make this a unique venue for sampling Beaver Valley's finest products. It is a popular cycling destination, and provides easy access to the Bruce Trail and the Kolapore Wilderness Trails. You can pick up a delicious lunch to go, or dine-in; a hearty meal at Ravenna can fuel the next leg of your adventure.

The Beaver Valley is renowned for its spectacular scenery, bountiful orchards and warm hospitality. With seven Apple Pie Trail stops, it is easy to while away a whole day exploring, chatting and sampling. Beaver Valley Orchard and Cidery brews a delightful, dry apple cider from their own apples; visit their beautifully converted barn and see the cider-making process first-hand. If you choose to paddle the Beaver River during your adventures, you can indulge in fresh-baked apple pie at Blackbird Pie Company at your exit point in Heathcote.

Several orchards open their gates to visitors for pick-your-own and farm produce. It is so valuable as consumers to know about our local food systems; drop in for fun and learning. Farmer's Pantry is a particular favourite with families; on Thanksgiving weekend, they are likely to see 10,000 guests in the orchard.

Grapes As Well As Apples

Georgian Hills Vineyard is a wonderful stop for local wines and ciders. On weekends at 11 a.m. you can join them for a vineyard and winery tour including tasting. Relax on their patio for scenic Beaver Valley views, wines, and artisanal cheese pairings. They also offer off-site tours such as paddling the Beaver River or cruising the Collingwood Harbour, wines included.

The Georgian Bay area has recently been designated as "an emerging wine region" by the Wine Council of Ontario. The same climate and geography conditions that support

apple-growing make it an ideal area for grape production.

Continuing down the Beaver Valley, visit the wonderful art galleries and eateries of Clarksburg and Thornbury. Meaford and Craigeleith offer visitors a wide range of arts, dining, museums, and markets to explore.

Each stop along the Apple Pie Trail provides a unique experience of the beauty and bounty of Apple Country.

The Trail began in 2009 and was created by Patti Kendall, the director of marketing and events for the Blue Mountain Village Association. Initially businesses were reluctant to get involved because they didn't believe it would create tourism. Today there is a waiting list of businesses wanting to join the Trail. Culinary tourism is a growing trend, both in Canada and internationally. Future plans are exploring ways to make the Trail more interactive.

No excursion to Apple Country is complete without a relaxing soak at Scandinave Spa Blue Mountain. Featuring outdoor baths, luxurious steam room, wood-fired sauna, registered massage, getaway packages, and a tasty bistro, the Scandinave provides an excellent finish to your Apple Pie Trail adventure.

With so much to see, do, absorb and enjoy, you will want to visit often to savour the Apple Pie Trail and explore this fascinating area of the Niagara Escarpment. **NEV**

For more information see applepietrail.ca.

Sandra J. Howe's last feature for Niagara Escarpment Views was "Atop Spirit Rock," Summer 2015. For more, see www.sandrajhowe.com.

Doug Edwards of Durham was originally from Hamilton. Now retired, he does nature photography full time. For more, see www.OneModelPlace.com.