



# THE SUMMER SIDE *of* COLLINGWOOD

BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT ■ PHOTOGRAPHED BY MIKE DAVIS

The Collingwood area along southern Georgian Bay can be a piece of heaven on a summer's day. Last year the Georgian Triangle Tourist Association (GTТА) arranged a day of tours and experiences to show some of the area's special pleasures. A highlight was a tour of Collingwood harbour, given by Peter de Vries of Summerbound.



Peter de Vries of Summerbound tours people around Georgian Bay in this comfortable boat.

**P**ETER DE VRIES is a wealth of knowledge on the history of the harbour at Collingwood, yet he is equally capable of taking his boat close to and discussing the newest developments. The comfortable cruise boat also went to the bay side of the iconic Collingwood terminal buildings, and when coming back to port, provided beautiful views of the Niagara Escarpment that embraces Collingwood to the south.

Summerbound offers a variety of packages, tailored to different groups and

interests. Families can take a two-hour cruise with an off-boat swim near the Nottawasaga lighthouse. Adults can enjoy a 1 ½-hour romantic sunset cruise. There are “girls’ day out” tours for wine tasting. Longer, historic land tours to Midland and Penetanguishene are available.

Of particular interest to Escarpment lovers might be the “Walk Waterfall and Wine Tour” that includes visits to Eugenia Falls, Hogg’s Falls, the views from Old Baldy, and a stop at a local winery for sampling.

An impressive day trip is

the drive to Tobermory, a cruise to see shipwrecks and Flowerpot Island, lunch in Little Tub Harbour, a hike to the Grotto in Bruce Peninsula National Park, and taking in waterfalls and gorgeous views of Beaver Valley before returning to Collingwood.

### **Carving the Escarpment**

Xtreme Hummer Adventures provided a land experience up, down, in and out of the Escarpment in a Hummer built like a cross between a jeep and a tank. Owner Mark Bourbonnais was at

the wheel for an intense, rollicking ride on roads to the top of the Niagara Escarpment and through forests on road allowances.

Casting aside all concerns over any harm done to the area’s fragile ecosystems, the drive was a thrill ride through large water-filled mud holes, down extremely steep rocky scree, while churning up deep wheel ruts and occasionally being in danger of tipping over onto the side. There were moments when the view out the side window was only of the fern-covered ground.



▲ The Bruce Trail follows the Escarpment which forms an impressive feature west of Collingwood. Here, the tour group heads for a hike of the Siegerman Side Trail.



▲ Mark Bourbonnais of Xtreme Hummer Adventures delivers stunning Escarpment views during madcap drives.

Not for those made easily anxious, the Hummer does let all ages, people with disabilities, and seniors experience the rough, inaccessible parts of the Escarpment above Collingwood, while also providing breathtaking views

from the top down to Georgian Bay. Bourbonnais has more to entertain summer visitors.

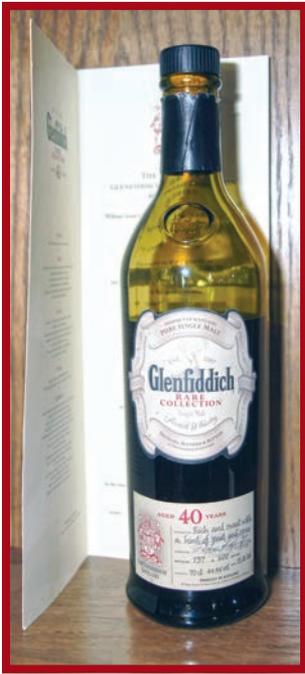
“We offer off-road Hummer tours with or without guided hike and/or picnic lunch,” he says, “wakeboard and waterski lessons, water

tubing, boat cruises, sunset cruises and jet ski rentals.”

**Siegerman Side Trail**

The Bruce Trail is not far from the town of Collingwood. Our guide led us to the Siegerman Side Trail which is within the

Beaver Valley section. The trail passes through mature trees including cedars and apple trees. Gradually going down to a lower elevation, we came upon beautiful wildflower-filled meadows and a creek that feeds the Beaver River.



▲ The bottle of 40-year-old Glenfiddich which costs \$615 for a generous dram.



▲ Alex Yuen and Cheryl McMenemy conduct a guided tasting at Collingwood Olive Oil Company



◀ The Niagara Escarpment rises dramatically south and west of Collingwood. View from Georgian Bay.

### Lunch in Thornbury

GTTA treated us to our choice of a hot lunch at The Dam Pub in Thornbury, famous for scotch whiskies. A staggering 736 different brands were available, many on display behind locked grills, with servers knowing a fair bit about them. The count has since been increased to more than 780!

“People ask me when I will stop adding to the collection; my answer is always ‘when we run out of room!’” explains Stephanie Price, co-owner with her parents Sandy and Gordon Price. “Mainstream whiskies such as The Glenlivet, The Glenfiddich, Balvenie,

Macallan, Glenmorangie are always popular, however we find that when folks come into the pub they want to try something new because of our vast selection and our whisky expertise.”

We were all impressed with the bottle of 40-year-old Glenfiddich, which costs an eye-popping \$615 for one dram, or “1 ½ ounces in our house,” adds Price. All of us stuck to beer or soft drinks.

### Oil & Vinegar Tasting

I had an embarrassing experience at the Collingwood Olive Oil Company where we were guided through a tasting.

▼ Humming through the mud puddles on a road allowance on top of the Escarpment.





▲ Iron horses stop traffic in the country outside of Collingwood. It was later learned that Roger Edwards is the artist who created them.



▲ The famous Collingwood grain terminals from the little-seen bay side.



◀ The lucky few who were treated to a day of touring some of Collingwood's attractions.



▲ Collingwood's main shopping street ends at the bay.

After hearing about the health benefits of fresh-pressed, extra-virgin olive oil, we were given a tiny paper cup of Greek olive oil to swirl in our mouths just as if it were wine.

I immediately felt a peppery burning at the back of my throat and fell into a coughing/choking fit. It was such an extreme response that I couldn't breathe, and co-owner Alex Yuen brought me a paper cone of clear liquid to drink. I thought it would be water, but it tasted like lemonade. Instead, it turned out to be balsamic vinegar! I have never before drunk vinegar.

The delicious taste caused me to question the seemingly hateful action of the soldier at Christ's crucifixion who, at the cry for water, offered vinegar to drink. Could it have been an act of mercy instead of viciousness? My mind was spinning at the thought of harsh olive oil and drinkable vinegar.

While I avoided further oils, I taste tested several vinegars and went home with a bottle of mango-flavoured white balsamic vinegar that was superb. **NEV**

*Gloria Hildebrandt is the co-founder, co-publisher and editor of Niagara Escarpment Views.*

