

DARIEN SAIL & POWER SQUADRON
DISTRICT 2, UNITED STATES POWER SQUADRONS®

Our website: DSPSCT.org
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Kayaking The Rideau Canal



The Rideau Canal has 47 locks and was finished in 1832, which makes it the oldest continuously operated lock system in North America. It was envisioned after the War of 1812, when the British realized that the Americans could easily block off the St. Lawrence River and leave the major British naval base in Kingston at the mercy of the Americans.

The construction project was supervised by Lt. Colonel John By, who was fired at the end of the project due to cost overruns. Bytown, the town he founded where the Ottawa River meets the canal was renamed Ottawa, but the first body of water after leaving Kingston is still called Colonel By Lake.

Our close friend, Frank White, had spent summers in a family home on the canal. He got us interested in exploring the canal. We planned the 126 mile journey carefully. We had been kayaking for years but had never taken on even an overnight trip. We had two 9-foot kayaks with just enough room behind the seat to place a tent in one and sleeping bags in the other, and we tied on our backpacks on the bow under a waterproof cover. Our safety equipment was a pump tied to the seat, a flashlight, a whistle, a life jacket, and a paddle float to assist in getting back into a capsized kayak.

On June 18th, we put our kayaks in at Kingston, on Lake Ontario, and headed up to the four Kingston Mills Locks, our first set of locks. I got out and walked up to the lockmaster to ask where the portage was, because I didn't think he would delight in operating the locks just for two small kayaks.

"Portage?" he asked. "Why? When you come here, you should enjoy watching the locks work! You just have to pay first."

"How much is it?" I asked.

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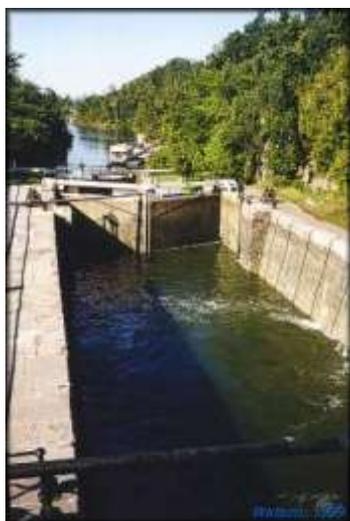
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“10 cents a foot,” he said.

“Well that sounds reasonable, 90 cents a kayak,” I replied.

“No, we have a minimum of a 12-foot charge.”

In the end, we bought passes for the entire canal, all the way to Ottawa, which gave us distinctive triangular stickers to place on our bows.



We paddled into the first lock. It was large enough to hold a 90-foot boat with a 23-foot beam. We were told to hold onto the vertical iron bars on the sides and the lockmaster closed the downstream gates. Then he started flooding the lock. We had a lift of about 10 feet which took about 10 to 15 minutes, then he opened the upstream gates and we paddled into the adjacent lock and repeated the process three more times and when the last gates opened, we paddled out onto Colonel By Lake.

By this time, the skies were looking very grey and winds were picking up. Although the prevailing winds in Kingston come out of the southwest, luck wasn't with us, and the wind was coming out of the north. Soon those winds were driving rain into our faces. This wasn't what we had envisioned, and it wasn't much fun. There was a campsite on the lake, so we headed in, set up camp, walked up to the highway, and ate at a Tim Horton's. It was our first day, and we were still excited about the trip and adventure.

The next day was sunny and smooth sailing. We made the ten miles through River Styx and on to Lower Brewers Lock. We had planned our time schedule to make it to a lock or a town and call it a day. Within a day or two, the lockmasters were calling ahead about us, and at least three times, motorboats that had passed us were held up waiting for us at the next lock. They must have thought it was something to see this old couple with their tiny kayaks coming through, because they would smile and wave as we arrived. The canal is currently for recreational use only, which I'm not sure decreases or increases danger.



Each lock station has a large lawn, and you can camp there for five dollars. Most have showers and bathrooms, and usually there is a town around them or close by. We would try to stay in a hotel or motel every night we could, and we would eat in restaurants when available, and buy something to

make our next meal. It worked out that we had to pitch a tent on less than a third of the nights.

One afternoon, the town we decided to stay in had no vacancies in the local hotels, the prior night we had tented, and we were ready for a real bed. We entered the tourist office and explained this to a woman with a sympathetic face. “Call this number,” she said, and she wrote it down and handed to us. That turned out to be a large bed and breakfast, but the voice at the other end immediately stated they had no vacancy except the honeymoon suite. We took it. Well, they sent a white stretch limo to pick us up and bring us to a room with a heart shaped bathtub in the middle of it. There were more plastic flower arrangements than required, but we

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had a good night's sleep, although it wasn't cheap.

The historical aspect of this journey is a true delight. Watching these ancient manual locks operate and seeing the pride the lockmasters pass on to their young apprentices seems to stop time. Travelling through mill towns and historic limestone towns surrounded by pristine wilderness filled with wildlife is my ideal vacation.

Our goal was to get to Ottawa on Canada Day, which is July 1. It's something like the Fourth of July here, except they celebrate the union of three colonies, Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, to come under the dominion of the British Empire, and of course we celebrate the opposite.



If you've seen a picture of Ottawa, you'll see that the canal goes straight through and there are 4 locks that go down to the river. The dock is concrete, so I took empty soda bottles with caps and used them as fenders and tied up our 9-foot kayaks, and we were right in the center of the city. The city was one gigantic party, everyone was dressed in red with some of them with red paint on their faces or bodies, the parliament was shut down with an enormous bandstand in front of it, everybody was dancing, it was Canada Day! We spent the night in a great hotel and the next day took a bus to Kingston to get our car and return to pick up the kayaks.

— CDR Mark Dam

Speaker Series

DSPS began its 2020-2021 Speaker Series on November 8 with a "virtual" talk by William McKeever – Shark Documentarian, Movie Producer, and Author of *Emperors of the Deep: Sharks – The Ocean's Most Mysterious, Most Misunderstood and Most Important Guardians*.

All of our currently-scheduled speakers will be presented via Zoom. We will return to in-person events when conditions permit. The links needed to join the Zoom events will be included in reminder emails as the time for each event approaches, so keep an eye out for these emails. If you need to update your email address, please go to <https://www.usps.org/cgi-bin/nat/tools/myprofile.cgi> You will need to log in using your USPS Certificate Number and PIN. You can also send an email to DSPSCT@Gmail.com.

Sun., Dec. 13	Bill Lynn – Director, Herreshoff Museum – “Power and Sail, The Herreshoff Yachts and Their History”
Sun., Jan. 10	Thomas Halaczinsky , Author/Filmmaker – “Archipelago New York”
Sun., Jan. 31	Captain Lada Simek , Educator/Master Scuba Diver – “The Oceans, Above and Below”
Sun., Mar. 14	DSPS Change of Watch; Mark Andreas – “Sailing in the Arctic”