



VOYAGEUR TRAIL NEWS

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The Voyageur Trail Association is a non-profit, volunteer group dedicated to building and maintaining a public hiking trail along the northern shores of Lakes Superior and Huron, from Thunder Bay to South Baymouth on Manitoulin Island.

*A member of
Hike Canada En Marche,
Hike Ontario,
Ontario Trails Council, and
Trans Canada Trail.*



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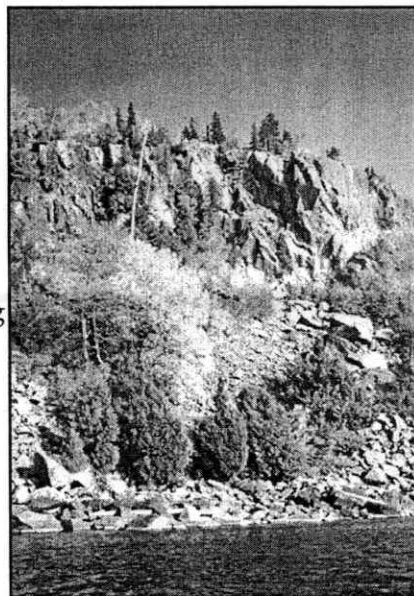
MIKE'S TOP THREE *by Mike Landmark*

I was asked awhile ago what my favourite areas to hike were. This was a difficult question to answer because the list is long and I have many great memories of hiking over the years. To make it easier, I have limited my choices to those sections of the Voyageur hiking trail that are within easy driving distance of my home in Gros Cap.

Closest to home, my favourite hiking trail is undeniably the Gros Cap Loop Trail. Built in 1974, this is the oldest section of the Voyageur trail system. A new addition to turn it into a loop was added in the year 2000. A few years ago, the landowner conducted selective logging on a section of this trail and, as a result, the sightings of wildlife, including birds, deer, moose and bear, have increased significantly as the new growth develops.

The changing faces of Lake Superior and Whitefish Bay are always fascinating to watch and allow a hiker to witness different facets of this natural wonder,

from storm-tossed waves to calm waters to a blank gray wall when the fog rolls in. As adopters of this section, Cheryl, Misty and I have hiked it for many seasons and know it the best. With the addition of a sign-in box partway along the trail, it seems many others are also enjoying this loop, judging by the signatures.



My next favourite hike would have to be the King Mountain/Robertson Cliffs section.

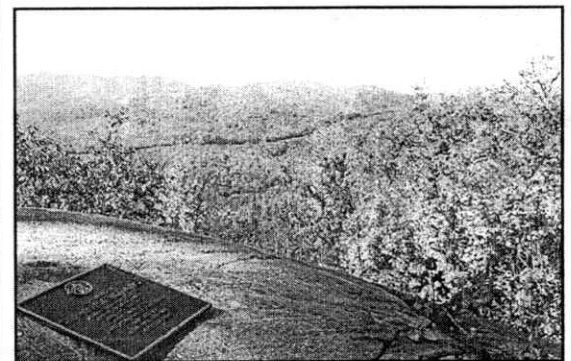


photo above: King Mountain with its dedication plaque to the memory of Steve Taylor, and below: Robertson Cliffs



The vistas from the lookouts are absolutely stunning and the steep parts give one a great physical workout, whether on foot or snowshoes. From the budding green trees in the spring to the spectacular colours in the fall, or the sight of a hawk soaring against the massive cliff faces, there is always something to thrill the photographer or the hiker who is simply content to stare in wonder.

My third choice would be the Shaw Dam section in the Thessalon area. The old trees, new plantations and the dam itself are definitely worth the hike. The dedication and the hardships the builders of the dam must

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MIKE'S TOP THREE *(Cont'd page 1)*

have endured never cease to amaze me when I see this impressive structure. And, one of the other highlights of hiking this section in the summer is a stop at the Little Rapids General Store for ice cream (even Misty gets a baby cone!). Unfortunately, the Ministry of Natural Resources has deemed the Shaw Dam to be structurally unsound and has removed a section of it. Hikers are no longer allowed to cross over the top of the dam. Work is in progress to reroute this segment (see the article on Shaw Dam below).

So, there you have it, a very small sample of the many wonderful hiking trails that make up the Voyageur Trail system. Perhaps at a later date, I will write another article about sections further away from home and hiking opportunities that I experienced while participating in the Trans Canada Relay 2000.



SHAW DAM *by Mike Landmark*

The Shaw Dam is located in the Thessalon section of the VTA trail system, just north of A4 and approximately 23 kilometres along the trail. This dam is the most northerly of the three water control dams on the Bridgeland/Little Thessalon River system that once supplied water to the Little Rapids generating station.

In 1931, the provincial government granted relief funding for construction of the dam. The authorities established a minimum wage of 35 cents per hour for a 10-hour day.

Construction started in January, 1931 and was completed in May, 1931, right on schedule. The names of those eighteen hardy men who mixed the mortar and laid the stones throughout the bone-chilling days of that winter are engraved in the cement on the top of the dam, but have gradually been worn away by wind and weather throughout the years.

The Shaw Dam is quite a unique structure. The granite masonry was blasted from a nearby cliff and slopes from the river bottom upward for 40 feet to the concrete deck at



the top, linking the rough granite bluffs on either side. Below the dam, the river drops away in a series of small falls and rapids to gentler waters below.

A few years ago, the Ministry of Natural Resources engineers inspected all dams in Ontario and declared that the Shaw Dam was not up to standard. In the spring of 2004, they removed approximately two metres of wing dam on the east side to reduce hydraulic pressure on the structure. At the same time, the MNR revoked permission for anyone to cross over the top of the dam. As a consequence, the Voyageur Trail in that area is currently in the process of being rerouted to cross the river south of the dam. However, it is still well worth your while to take a side trip to view this impressive structure and reflect on the hard work and endurance of the men who built it so many years ago.



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VT NEWS envelope label!**



VTA Membership Secretary
705-949-4105

**If you go, consult access point A4 in the
Thessalon Section of the Voyageur Trail
Guidebook...pages 116 - 121 in version 3.2
(current) edition.**