

Canada 150 Circumnavigation: The 19 Bridge Tour

As Fred said “*You know when you live on an island when you pass under 19 bridges when doing the loop*”. Fred, Suzanne, and I did a pre-run canoe loop on the Canada 150 Circumnavigation Event under brilliant sunshine on June 8. What a nice day for canoeing. What an interesting route. There is lots to look at and a fair bit of history that you pass by.

Here is our route:

1. We started from the boat dock on the Rideau River at Clegg,
2. Travelled downriver to Sussex Avenue,
3. Portaged to Governor Bay in the Ottawa River,
4. Paddled up the Ottawa River past the falls to the locks,
5. Climbed up the locks and put in by the Chateau Laurier,
6. Paddled up the Canal to Carleton University,
7. Portaged through the university back to the Rideau River, and
8. Canoeed with the current on the Rideau River back to the Clegg dock.

Fred counted 19 bridges en route, but he could be wrong. Your estimates are welcome. That gives the kids something to do in the 5-6 hours it takes to paddle around (the time to complete the paddle may vary).

Trip Notes:

At the Rideau Tennis Club in Overbrook, we were able to shoot the rapids with the water relatively high after some rain earlier this week. If the September water is low, as it usually is, you may want to get out and line the canoe for a couple hundred metres or portage it from the rock in this photo. Bring a rope if you plan to line it. I forgot.



You have two choices as you approach Rideau Falls. You can get out on the left side of the river at this dock:



which is located before the white bridges (pictured below) and walk just over a kilometre to the boat dock at the rowing club. You will be crossing Sussex at a light.



Alternatively, you can take the right channel and get out here:



by Stanley Street and walk east about a kilometre to Governor Bay. When you see the sign below after the 24 Sussex traffic circle, turn left down the path pictured below.



You can then launch your canoe here:



Please note: There is no signalized intersection between the takeout and the Ottawa River access. You can cross at the traffic circle at 24 Sussex if you are careful. This route is a longer paddle on the Ottawa River but provides a good view of the falls (Pictured below).



The portage up to the Canal is straightforward (watch out for goose poop).



We put in at the dock on the north side of the Wellington overpass (pictured below):



You cannot get lost going south on the Canal. Don't forget to wave at the cyclists and the bench sitters.



Here are more locks (but a different kind).



Watch out for power boats!

At Carleton University before the locks this is the ideal place to take out.



1. Walking though Carleton University was tricky due to construction. Cross at the locks (there is an island on Colonel By but no light, so watch for traffic)
2. Follow the crosswalks straight and walk on the right side of the large gray building
3. Continue through the passage between the two buildings (the building on the right is labelled "Architecture")
4. Go to road (Campus Avenue), turn right, and follow the sidewalk to the river
5. Continue on the sidewalk left towards Bronson and walk 100 m past all the picnic tables
6. Take the small gravel path to the right and follow it about 100 m
7. There are at least three access paths to the river. The 2nd and 3rd are better than the first cut through the bushes (see below).



We took the channel closer to Billings Bridge rather than Ottawa South and it worked fine with the water being high. We will update its condition in September if the water is significantly lower. There may be a portage necessary here as well.

Our trip total time was 5 ½ hours including a lunch break at the locks, but pretty steady paddling during the voyage. Bring lots of water. Bring sunscreen if we are blessed with such a day in September.