

**Follow along with us as we cruise onboard our
56' Ocean Yacht.**

Somewhere on the Water

Our Great Loop

Balsam Lake anchorage to Lake Couchiching anchorage

Monday, July 14, 2025

Welcome! Glad to have you here!

Today turned out to be a long day, so here it goes!

Weighed anchor before 7 o'clock and headed into the first of 3 narrow canals that Valkyrie will have to cruise through to get to Lake Simcoe, our final destination for today.

There is no room to meet a boat in these canals. Mark made a Sécurité call before entering this first canal. A securite call is to alert nearby vessels of your intentions, and if anyone has anything to say about it, they are to reach out via the VHF radio.



There is a little bit of fog hanging over the water this morning, and I almost think it is smoke from Canadian fires, but I could not be so sure. Either way, it gave an eerie feeling as we entered the narrow, treelined canal with no end in sight.

The canal is narrow, and its depth is 6 feet. We draw 4, so Valkyrie is cruising with 2' of water under her. The speed limit is 10km, so obviously we are going at super slow, idle speed.



By 8 o'clock, we made it to the Kirkfield Hydraulic Lift Lock. Another bathtub lock like Peterborough. This lock is a 49' lift, the 2nd highest in the world, second to Peterborough. It opened at 9 am, so we took a walk around the grounds and checked out the lock, and marveled at its engineering.



We are going down in elevation today as we are at the highest elevation point on the TSW.

As we exit the Kirkfield lock, we are in another narrow canal. A Sécurité call was made, and off we went. We were the only boat in the lift lock this morning, and although it was exciting, it lacked the butterflies and overall awesomeness that Peterborough did. Maybe because we were by ourselves. Back in Peterborough, we were in the lock with boaters we knew and were able to share the first-time experience.

Fun Fact:

The Kirkfield Lift Lock is the second-highest hydraulic lift lock in the world, with a lift of 15 metres (49 ft). The lock is situated at the highest point along the Waterway at 256.20 meters (840.5 ft) above sea level. <https://parks.canada.ca/lhn-nhs/on/trentsevern/visit/posteeclusage-lockstation/ecluse-lock-36-kirkfield>

It was a magnificent cruise through the canals this morning. The smell of the trees, the earthy musky aromas, was powerful. We saw loons, kingfisher birds, and geese. We were hoping for a moose sighting, but hahaha, no such luck. (Moose do not live in this area 😊.)

Mark did a great job; he is a great captain, but he was relieved that this portion of the day was over!

There were 3 narrow canals connected by Mitchell Lake and Canal Lake. Both man-made and shallow. While cruising Canal Lake, home of a unique Carden Alvar, we pass through a historical bridge nicknamed the Hole in the Wall, the Canal Lake Bridge.

Here are all the *fun facts* of the area we cruised this morning:

This excavated canal section connects Balsam Lake, the highest point on the waterway, with the Kirkfield Lift Lock (Lock 36) and then Canal Lake. Boaters often refer to the narrow canal leading *from* Lake Couchiching *to* another section of the canal as "The Bowling Alley" due to the boat traffic, but the specific area near Balsam Lake is typically just described as the narrow, shallow canal. It is known for being very shallow and narrow, requiring caution and sometimes a "sécurité" call to alert other boaters. Google.

The Trent Canal section between Balsam Lake and Kirkfield is a narrow, man-made passage called the [Kirkfield Cut](#), which leads to the [Kirkfield Lift Lock](#) (Lock 36). This stretch is known for being challenging for larger boats due to its narrowness, overgrown sides with potential hazards, and the need for slow, careful navigation, especially when meeting other vessels. The waterway's direction of travel changes at Balsam Lake, the highest point in the system, so boaters must follow the new downstream navigation rules for that section. (Red and Green markers flip) Google.

Mitchell Lake was created during the construction of the Trent-Severn Waterway in the late 1800s, and as a result, it is quite shallow with a maximum depth of 10 feet. Mitchell Lake is located near the eastern edge of the Carden Alvar, a type of grassland habitat characterized by thin soils and sparse vegetation on top of limestone bedrock that is only found in a few spots in Ontario (and around the

world). The Carden Alvar supports unique assemblages of species, including more than 230 bird species, 450 plants, and 140 butterfly/dragonfly species. The Carden Alvar extends for approximately 10 kilometers around Canal Lake.

<https://www.kawarthawaterfront.com/mitchell-lake/>

Canal Lake was created during the construction of the Trent-Severn Waterway in the late 1800s, and as a result, it is quite shallow with a maximum depth of 15 feet. <https://www.kawarthawaterfront.com/canal-lake/>



This bridge was designated in 1988 as a National Historic Site of Canada, the highest official honor for a bridge in Canada. Designation is well-justified. The bridge is the oldest concrete arch bridge known to remain in Canada with a 1905 construction date, a date which is cast into the center of the arch.

<https://historicbridges.org/bridges/browser/?bridgebrowser=ontario/canallake/>

10:15 am – we went through the Bolsover Swing Bridge. This bridge opens on demand. Mark tried calling several times on the radio, but no one answered. After a few minutes of hanging out at the bridge, it opened. We did not see anybody nor hear any response on the radio.



11:16 am, we just finished lock 38 in Talbot. This morning, when we arrived at the Kirkfield Lock, there was a Mainship tied to the lower wall. It had left by the time we locked through. We have now caught up with it. Mark chatted with the captain and learned that he tried to anchor near us in Balsam Lake last night but could not get a good set, so he decided to cruise through the narrow canal, lock through, and spend the night on the lower wall. We locked through the remaining locks with him.



Lake Simcoe is the largest inland lake in southern Ontario and a significant source of drinking water for hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

Due to its size, Lake Simcoe, on a windy day, can have a lot of fetch and make for an uncomfortable crossing. Know the weather before you try to cross this lake.

We decided not to follow the pack and go to Orillia to overnight. We passed through the Narrows and Orillia and decided to anchor near Chief's Island. The Narrows in Orillia is a narrow channel that connects Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching and is congested with boat traffic and marinas.

2:55 pm – engines off anchorage near Chief's Island, Lake Couchiching.

This area is a busy anchorage for locals. The Island is a private island, and the anchorage is marked private. We stayed out of the marked area out of respect for the signs, and it was very shallow. The water was clear and registered 78 degrees. Perfect for swimming.

Mark flew the drone, we went swimming, Mark scraped the transom, we had cocktails on the mezzanine, and we had leftovers for dinner.

It was a long, busy day for us. I experienced a lot of camera issues due to the heat. The GoPro cameras if overheated, shut themselves off. In addition, because of the long day, the camera cards filled up and had to be emptied a couple of times. I did not capture the best of the best going through all the locks today, but we have been through a lot of locks, so I think we all have the gist.



Daily Summary:

Departed from Anchorage in Balsam Lake @ 6:44 am

Arrived Kirkfield Lock @ 7:58 am

Departed Kirkfield Lock @ 9:05 am

Arrived at Anchorage Lake Couchiching @ 2:55 pm

Days cruised: 34 Days on the loop: 48

Hours traveled: 1hr 14 mins + 5 hrs 48 mins = 7hrs 02 mins total for the day

Nautical Miles Traveled: 6.11 + 29.55 for the day (859.16 total miles)

Average Speed 5 knots

Weather: Sunny in the 80's

Anchorage/mooring/marina review: Amazing! Swim, relax, peaceful

#of locks we went through: 6 (70 total locks)

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/BRBEUJfBI0g>

That is a wrap for this update!



Time is unrenewable and tomorrow is never promised so do it before you can't!

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