

Art, antiques and great garden

Ramble through the North Grenville area, with a lovely stop for lunch

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Where did you go?

We went to the North Grenville countryside, the area around Kemptville just a half-hour or so south of Ottawa. And we had quite a delightful time. Define delightful.

That's easy. In this case, it involved taking in the gently pretty scenery of the area, browsing for art and antiques in interesting settings, and wandering through some **stunning gardens**. Oh, and enjoying a lovely lunch.



That does sound appealing.

North Grenville does not spring readily to mind when an Ottawan is thinking of spending a leisurely day in the country, so it's nice to be able to report that the area does indeed possess considerable charms. In the first place, it's peaceful and pleasant to drive through, a panorama of fields, forest and -- to add a touch of history here and there -- sturdy evidence of a pioneer past. Throughout the area, you spot all kinds of buildings from an earlier time (many lovingly refurbished and inhabited), century homes as well as old stone churches. Sitting just outside Kemptville, for instance, by the side of County Road 43, is the lovely old structure that was once St. Augustine's, the Anglican church for the community of Actons Corners. Get out of the car for a closer look at its weathered stone, and you discover that the church was built in 1879. The area is filled with such serendipitous sightings.

What about the art and antiques you mentioned?

There are a number of inviting places throughout the region, especially around Kemptville. We headed to a couple we'd heard of that sounded intriguing. They're within a stone's throw of each other. The first was the Homestead Gallery (868 County Road 44), opened just a couple of months ago by Dave Leonard, a former landscape artist and native Torontonion who's been living in North Grenville almost two decades now. For Leonard, Homestead is a dream realized, a tiny space filled with art -- paintings, pottery, glass and metalwork -- by local artists, including Leonard himself (glass), his wife Kathy Scott (pottery) and his late father Ron Leonard (paintings). There's also a wonderful display of work by Metcalfe's Gary Briggs, whimsical bronze renderings of vegetables and a wry take on genetically modified food. Leonard usually opens Thursday to Sunday, but will also open on request; see homestead-gallery.com.

And the antiques?

Just up the road at 895 County Road 44. Country Side Antiques is the pet project of Karen Glenn, who thinks a visit to her place is a bit like a visit to Upper Canada Village. And she's right. Her large and diverse collection of antiques is housed primarily in a stone home built in 1835, and set off by lovely gardens. But you can also check out the log structure on her property that's two centuries old and is believed to be the area's first homestead. She's open year round, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday to Sunday.

Where did you go after that?

We wanted to take a peek at the area's new winery, Green Gables, just up County

Road 44 at the corner of Porter Road. Sadly, it was closed. It's only open weekends now until the end of September. Then it closes so they can get busy and make their wine. I'm thinking a return trip might be in order.

Undoubtedly. But speaking of good taste, or tastings, where did you have that lovely lunch?

At the Brigadoon in tiny Oxford Mills -- home, incidentally, to equestrian Olympic silver medallist Jill Henselwood, for whom a reception was planned later at the restaurant the day we were there. The Brigadoon, housed in an 1853 heritage building on Bridge Street, is an amazing place. Walking into the dining room, you feel as if you've just entered the olde curiosity shoppe, except with good food. The shelves on one side of the room are artfully crammed with bric-à-brac and dated kitsch -- everything from royalty souvenirs to dolls to posters and pictures -- and the rest of the room is abundantly decorated with hunting prints, flintlocks and an essential portrait of Our Dear Queen, Victoria. The food was good, too, if a bit (and appropriately) old-fashioned. One of us sampled some fine fish and chips, while the other had tasty chicken-and-avocado on a croissant. As we were leaving, I noticed the Brigadoon has an afternoon tea each day from 2:30 to 4:30. How wonderful, I thought.



So much for that sensory pleasure. What about those stunning gardens you said

you'd visited?

That was a treat, too. On the road toward Burritt's Rapids, we went to **Rideau Woodland Ramble**, the place so many people have raved about. We discovered why it's so rave-worthy. Seven acres of gardens and forest, the Ramble is a soul-restoring site that simply invites you to walk around its diverse beauty and enjoy. Sure, you can buy any number of plants there -- its garden-centre inventory is huge -- but you can also just savour the peace and get a few good ideas for your own gardening plans, whether they involve hostas, hydrangeas or lawn sculptures.

Sounds like a beautiful day all round. How do I get there?

There are two main ways to get to the North Grenville area, one more scenic than the other. The slower, scenic route has you going down Prince of Wales and more or less following what used to be old Highway 16 (and is now Highway 73) to North Gower. After that, it's Highway 5 and County Road 44 toward Kemptville. Because we started a bit late and wanted to maximize our time in the area, we took the faster way, down Highway 416 to Kemptville (Exit 34) and along County Road 43. From there, our circuit took us west and south to Oxford Mills, south and east to our two sites on County Road 44, then back up north and west again (along County Road 43 to Burritt's Rapids Road) to our woodland ramble. Whichever route you take, and whatever order you do it in, it's a lovely, leisurely drive.

Janice Kennedy is a columnist for the Sunday Citizen.

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