

Lanark County Driving Tours

Limestone Tour



Get Ready

DESCRIPTION

The ruggedness that characterizes much of Lanark County gives way in the south to the Limestone Plain, once part of the floor of the prehistoric Champlain Sea, now a mainly flat region of exposed limestone and shallow soils. Transportation dominates the history of this region, from the Rideau Canal, a World Heritage Site built in 1826–32 as a military supply route linking Montreal and Kingston, to the railway, which took people and businesses to places water couldn't. The land is more open here, the roads straighter, the discoveries delightful—whether it's antiques, golfing, a fine meal, or just a leisurely afternoon spent exploring in good company.



Start Here

Tour starts and finishes in Smiths Falls, approximately 100 km.

BEGIN YOUR TOUR AT THE COMBINED LOCKS IN VICTORIA PARK.

Smiths Falls owes much of its development to first the Rideau Canal and then as a divisional point for the CN and CP railways, with mills and factories establishing themselves here to take advantage of the excellent transportation links. This heritage and more is remembered in dedicated museums, which are well worth a visit. At the intersection of Beckwith and Lombard, note the lockmaster's house, which was built with various defensive features so that the locks could be defended in the event of an American attack. From Lombard Avenue, turn right onto Abbott Street and cross the river at Detached Locks. A distinctive feature of this lock is the raised bascule bridge, a rolling-lift railway bridge built in 1912–13 and used until the rail line ceased operation in 1984. It was designated a National Historic Site of Canada in 1983.



TURN LEFT ONTO HWY 43 WEST. TURN LEFT AT PORT ELMSLEY.

This small village on the Tay River was originally named Barbadoes, in honour of the birthplace of its founder, Samuel Weatherhead, agent to Benedict Arnold. Arnold had received these lands as part of his reward for his efforts on behalf of the king during the American Revolution. Once home to three locks of the First Tay Canal, the village prospered as a mill site and forwarding community for goods coming to and from Perth. It fell into decline when bypassed by the Second Tay Canal. Ruins of the old graphite mill can still be seen by the river.



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Drive On

FOLLOW PORT ELMSLEY ROAD. TURN RIGHT ONTO RIDEAU FERRY ROAD, THEN FOLLOW IT TO PERTH.

You will pass by the Port Elmsley Drive In Theatre, the only operating drive in theatre in Lanark County. This is also a great opportunity to take a quick detour to the town of Rideau Ferry, where you can see the big Rideau as it flows by. There is a sandy beach at the Yacht Club Conservation Area that is a great spot for a picnic.



Perth was established in 1816 as the social, administrative, and judicial centre for emerging settlements back of the Front. The strict social code of the British military guided the settlement for many years, the most illustrious example being duelling, including the fatal duel of 1833 between rival law students over the affections of a local governess. The many elegant Georgian homes stand testament to the town's early prominence, while its museums, shops, restaurants, parks, and festivals contribute to the town's continuing popularity.



FOLLOW GORE ST THROUGH DOWNTOWN, THEN TURN RIGHT ONTO NORTH ST (COUNTY RD 10).

One of the earliest roads surveyed by the British military, the Perth Road marches in a nearly straight line past neat farms with solid stone and brick houses, and through the crossroad communities of Richardson and Gillies Corners, each signalling their presence from afar by church spires, until you come to Franktown. Originally a supply centre for early settlers, a townsite was soon established attracting 200 residents and the eventual construction of two churches. Take a moment to explore the side streets east of the highway, especially in spring. There is a reason why Franktown is known as the Lilac Capital of Canada.



AT FRANKTOWN, TURN LEFT TO TAKE HWY 15 TO BLACKS CORNERS. TURN RIGHT ON BECKWITH 9TH LINE.



You will travel past Beckwith Park and the Goodwood Marsh, which make a great place to stop and stretch your legs on a walking trail. In the winter months, a skating trail is maintained at Beckwith Park.



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TURN RIGHT ONTO DERRY SIDE ROAD. TURN LEFT ON GLENASHTON RD. TURN LEFT ONTO ASHTON STATION RD.

As you travel to Ashton Station, watch for the corner with the historic Kennedy and Dewar cemeteries. The village of Ashton is situated on the Jock River, and is the border between Lanark County and the former county of Carleton. Both the river and village of Ashton were once named Goodwood, in honour of the English estate of the Duke of Richmond, governor-in-chief of the Canadas, who visited the area in 1819, just days before his painful death from rabies. Pause a while to take in the three historic churches, the old mill, and many fine homes that make up the village.

BACKTRACK ON ASHTON STATION RD. CONTINUE SOUTHEAST TO TURN LEFT ON RICHMOND ROAD (CTY RD 10).

You will pass through the village of Prospect, a former wayside stop for travelers, between the military settlements of Perth (1816) and Richmond (1818). While its two hotels have long since disappeared, Prospect does have many fine old homes, churches, and burying grounds.

End Here

CONTINUE ON RICHMOND RD TO FRANKTOWN. TURN LEFT ON HWY 15 TO RETURN TO SMITHS FALLS AND THE CONCLUSION OF YOUR TOUR.

