



Sound Outlook

Part 3 - Hike, Bike or Paddle in the Scenic City this Summer

Things are starting to heat up, and open up, around Owen Sound.

Summer is here, signaled by that recent heat wave where temps hit 30 degrees plus. And some businesses, parks, and amenities are starting to open up. It doesn't mean that we can assume COVID is over – it's not – but it does mean we can enjoy summer while being safe. One of the best ways to enjoy summer in and around Owen Sound is to get on the water or hit the trails. If you've got wheels, a board, or a pair of feet, there are many places you can take them for some exercise and a chance to clear your head.

Did you know that Owen Sound has two rivers that run through it? Of course you did. But when's the last time you took advantage of them? When's the last time you took your kayak, canoe, or paddleboard out for a rip through the Scenic City? It's a completely different way to view Owen Sound, and one that's highly recommended. It's an easy way to get outside and maintain that social distancing while alleviating that feeling of cabin fever some of us have been wrestling with these past couple of months.



*8th Street Bridge via the Sydenham River
Photo: James Carrick*

For those who have a full day and want to really get those arms in shape, you can launch at the Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre and paddle the shoreline to Ainslie Wood This requires a little forethought and a parked vehicle but definitely worth it. You'll see parts of the area you've never seen before all while getting some Vitamin D and loads of exercise. For those who don't have a full day, why not take the afternoon and paddle from Harrison Park to the Mill Dam and back? That's only a couple of hours depending on your level of fitness. Pack some snacks and have a picnic on the grass at Harrison Park afterwards. Another option is to start at the Mill Dam and meander through the downtown core and back. Route numero four could see you put in along the Pottawatomi River and traverse the west shore of Owen Sound Bay past Kelso Beach, the marina, and Cobble Beach.



*View from East Escarpment
photo: Zak Erb*

If paddling isn't your thing, put on your walking shoes and get hiking. After a period of closure, many of the trails are open around Owen Sound including Harrison Park, the East Rocks and the West Rocks. A fantastic city hiking route starts at the Harbour where you can follow it along to the Bayshore and then continue on to join the Tom Thomson Trail, which can actually take you all the way to Meaford.

You may not want to take it that far, but a hike to Leith may be in the cards if you have the day. Just be mindful of high water this summer as some sections may be closed.

We're incredibly lucky to have the Bruce Trail running directly through Owen Sound, and some sections are now open. A personal favourite is the Palisades side trail at the southern terminus of 7th Avenue East. This advanced trail showcases some of the escarpment's best-kept secrets. Craggy cliff faces, lush forest, and low foot traffic mean an opportunity to explore the forest in isolation while being a stone's throw from home.

Got more of a need for speed? This is where the bike comes in handy. Many modern cities are built with biking in mind, and while Owen Sound may not have considered bicycles outright, you'd swear cycling is in its blood. City streets are a great way to get out and stretch those leg muscles, lined with beautiful trees, rivers and streams, parks and recreational spaces, and unique neighbourhoods.

For those looking to get off the beaten path, the Harrison Park fitness trail is a wide gravel trail running along the east side of the Sydenham River where you can challenge yourself with easy going, meandering hills. Continue onto the 'Mile Drive' and into the Grey Sauble Conservation Arboretum.

Alternatively, the West Rocks are a fantastic place to challenge yourself with a technical network of trails that travel through thick forest atop the escarpment. Our history is chalked full of ties to the railroad, and while the trains don't come to Owen Sound anymore, they've left a legacy of rail-trails that are a great way to bike all over. The section from the Hospital to Stone Tree is a local favourite with excellent opportunities to view wildlife.



Harrison Park Black History Cairn

Enjoying the waterways, paths, trails, and streets of Owen Sound via pedal, paddle, or bootstraps is one way it's earned its Scenic City moniker. With summer weather finally here and so much space to explore, social distancing has never been so easy. We're lucky to live in a place with so many open spaces to explore. Get out there!