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## A day of wine and roads

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If you asked people to name Ontario's wine country, most would say the Niagara Peninsula, and rightly so. But a few hundred kilometres farther east, Prince Edward County is beginning to be recognized as the province's newest wine region.

"The county," as locals call it, is virtually an island that extends out into Lake Ontario and is joined to the mainland via a narrow isthmus at Carrying Place, just east of Belleville.

That's a good starting point for a tour that will take you past some interesting wineries, but also will follow the historic Loyalist Parkway 55 km to Glenora, where it's just a short (free) ferry ride across to Adolphustown, where the Loyalists were given land grants after the American Revolution and where Upper Canada (and Ontario) began.

From the traffic lights at the swing bridge at Carrying Place, it's about 15 km down the parkway (also marked as County Road 33) to Closson Road, where a left turn takes you to the Closson Chase vineyards' store and tasting room in a restored 1880s barn.

Sample the Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays (in the county, half-ounce tastes are usually \$1 or \$2, refundable if you make a purchase), pick up a copy of the wine tour map and head back to the parkway.

After about four km you'll see Greer Road. Turn right, go about 1.5 km and you're at Rose Hall Run, where winemaker Dan Sullivan's 2007 Sullyzwicker white is a family favourite.

Back out on the parkway, it's just a short distance to Chadsey's Cairns, the most picturesque of any of the county's wineries. Park your car, walk down a pretty lane past a pioneer cemetery, and you'll find the wine store in a charming brick building originally built to store apples – a reminder of the days when other, more chewable fruits were the region's big crops.

Chadsey's Cairns is run by the husband-and-wife team of Richard Johnson and Vida Zalnieriuonas. Although only in business since 2003, theirs is nonetheless one of the county's oldest wineries. They have 20 acres "under vine" and use 95% estate grapes. Their first vintage of Muscat (2008) is worth a try at \$21 per bottle.

Next, you'll come to the village of Wellington with its many B&Bs and charming little harbour. Carry on down the parkway and in a barn just before the village of Bloomfield is an antique store with the greatest name – Dead People's Stuff. Bloomfield (established in 1799) is one of the county's main tourist destinations with its many gift shops, antique stores and restaurants. Not to be missed is the County Café and Wine Bar, where you can buy Kawartha Dairy ice cream and treat yourself to an exceptional cup of coffee.

In Bloomfield, the parkway becomes Highway 33 and will take you to historic Waring House, right at the junction of County Road 1, where a new traffic circle has helped ease congestion. Waring House is famous for its cooking school, and after sampling the restaurant's fare you'll understand why. The adjoining inn is not a bad place in which to spend the night, either, but be sure to make reservations.

Just before the busy town of Picton is a boutique brewery – in the heart of wine country!

At Barley Days Brewery, German brewmaster Jan Rorig uses only natural ingredients, meaning his beers have a shelf life of just three months. Light Summer Ale is a seasonal favourite, but I'm hooked on his Harvest Gold Pale Ale (\$12.45 for a carton of six).

Picton is the county's biggest town and its main street is jammed with trendy shops and restaurants. But on weekends, parking is at a premium.

Turn left at the stop sign at Bridge Street (just past the restored Regent Theatre) and you'll see the picturesque Picton Harbour Inn, where you can dine with a view of the yacht club. From there, it's eight km to the ferry at Glenora, which runs every 15 minutes and takes you back to the mainland.

Next time, bring your appetite and your camera and prepare to stay longer than just a few short hours. There's so much to see and do in the county.

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