

## Tip to Tip Trail

Welcome to the Tip to Tip Trail. The trail, which is on unceded Algonquin territory, is an easy walk with a out-and-back length of four kilometres, taking about 1.5 hours to complete at a leisurely hiking speed.

Numbered trail markers along the path go with the descriptions below. They highlight features along the trail that were either influenced by or important in the construction of the Rideau Canal, which is the oldest continuously operated canal in North America. Please be sure not to disturb plants and wildlife you may encounter.

The trail has two starting points, going east to west.

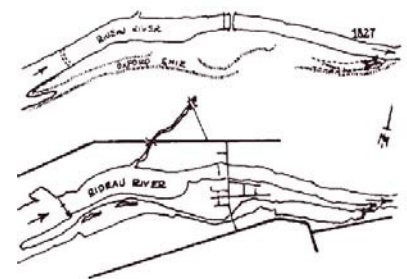
- The first is at Stop #1 at the downstream tip of the island at Lock 17 at 673 River Road. As you walk to Stop #12, the upstream tip, you will go past cool cedar forests, marshes, old survey markers, historic houses, a bridge, a dam, and a beech nut grove before you arrive at the pine and hemlock covered upstream tip.
- The second is at Stop #7 at the sign at the entrance to the park across from the Library at 1 Grenville Street in Burritt's Rapids, where there is on-street parking and a boat launch/parking lot nearby (across the canal). From here you can go west towards the upstream tip or towards the downstream tip. Each way is a leisurely 45 minutes.

### Stop No. 1: The Downstream Tip: Lock #17 and the Long Reach

To make a navigable waterway between Kingston and Ottawa, a journey of 202 kms, Colonel By had to raise water levels along the canal to flood out the rapids, waterfalls, and small areas of land. A lock, like the one here, was one of 45 at 23 lock stations built along the Rideau Canal to help manage the waterway.

The “blue line” on the wharf opposite is reserved for boats waiting to lock through. Boaters wishing to dock their vessels for extended time periods use the floating docks in the river channel on the other side of the tip.

The body of water between two lock stations is called a “reach.” It’s a 43 km cruise towards Ottawa from here north



to Long Island locks (Locks 14-16) near Manotick—the longest reach on the Rideau Canal.

### **Stop No. 2: A Changed Environment**

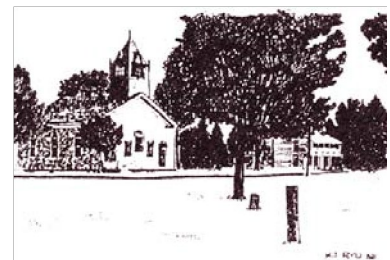
The canal channel you are walking beside did not exist before the Rideau Canal was built. The channel was originally a natural depression in the riverbank, known locally as the “Oxford Snye.” Colonel By excavated the snye and used the dug material to build this embankment. This approach was used to prevent water from the canal channel from entering the natural river course. The eastern white cedar growing in the forest here is a tree species well suited to this area of moist soils and limestone rock. It is typical of many wetland forest habitats along the canal.

### **Stop No. 3: A UNESCO World Heritage Site**

Since 2007 the Rideau Canal has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site to recognize its outstanding universal value for the engineering feat it represents, for the extent to which it is preserved with most of its original structures intact, and for its linkage to the development of North America.

### **Stop No. 4: Surveying a New Land**

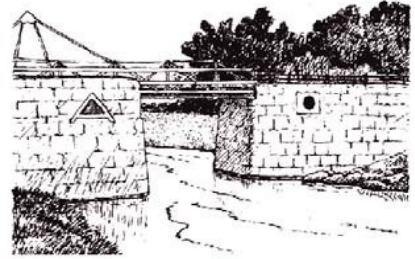
Before the canal could be constructed, maps and surveys of its route had to be made. Some of the forests along the route were so thick that standard surveying techniques of taking sightings and bearings could not be used. The surveyors had to invent new techniques. One was to find a tree on a high point of land and set it on fire at night to take a bearing. This stone boundary marker from the Ordinance Department located here was the method used to mark boundaries of crown lands along the canal. You may have noticed a couple of others nearby. The broad arrow on the side was the department’s symbol. The Roman numerals on the top of the stone were used to identify their location on the Ordinance Department’s property maps.



***Proceed along the water’s edge towards the white building with green-trim, where you will see Stops #5 and #6.***

### **Stop No. 5: The Swing Bridge**

The excavation of the canal channel made it necessary to build a bridge to accommodate both villagers and boats. Several bridges have been built here since 1826. The present steel truss swing bridge was installed in 1897 (renovated in 2018) and allows taller boats to pass. Parks Canada staff at the Lock open the bridge by turning a crank in the pivot of the bridge. Counterweights and a set of roller wheels mounted on a circular track underneath allow the bridge to be swung open with little effort. The opening of the bridge is both a unique experience to watch and a fixture in Burritt's Rapids life during boating season.



### **Stop No. 6: The Bridgeman's Home**

The current library building was originally the bridgeman's home and was used as the bridge office during the canal's navigation seasons earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the past, three blasts on the whistle would signal the arrival of a vessel wanting to "lock through" and call out the bridgeman.

***Cross over Grenville Street, Burritts Rapids, and walk towards the big sign within the park grounds.***

### **Stop No. 7: The Founding of Burritt's Rapids (At Tip to Tip Trail Sign in Park)**

Welcome to the village of Burritts Rapids. It was first settled in 1793 by Colonel Stephen Burritt, a United Empire Loyalist from Vermont. After the American Revolution, many Loyalists fled the United States to Canada. Many of them received land grants and settled along the Rideau and Cataraqui Rivers. Colonel Burritt was attracted to this site because of the waterpower from the rapids (at the bridge 300 m north of here), which could be used to operate a sawmill. So, when Colonel By surveyed the canal in 1826, there was already a small village here. If you have time, take a few moments to walk down the street to see some of the historic homes, buildings and church, pioneer graveyard, and historical plaque, in a village called



“Canada’s nearest equivalent of an English village” and “a hamlet worthy of Shakespeare.” (theWedge.live, 2019). Geocaching in and around the village is also possible.

### **Stop No. 8: A Water Highway**

Now a recreational paradise, boaters need navigational help through the canal with these red and green buoys that mark the channel all the way from Ottawa to Kingston. Each buoy is numbered and so identified on the navigation charts. Red buoys are kept on the “port” (left) when travelling upstream, and on the “starboard” (right) when travelling downstream. From a distance colour is often hard to identify. To help anxious skippers, red buoys are pointed and green buoys are square and the resulting difference in silhouette helps identify hazards on the right and left sides of the channel.

### **Stop No. 9: From Woodland to Wetland**

This lookout provides a view of a marsh that is an example of the variety of wetlands created along the Rideau Canal following its construction. Wetlands are important for many reasons. They provide habitat for many plants and animals. During periods of high-water levels, wetlands act like giant sponges, holding water and helping to prevent flooding. They also filter out pollutants and sediments from the water. Because of the wetlands’ importance to the whole ecosystem, Parks Canada regulates and manages the Rideau Canal, working with local conservation authorities, to help protect them.



### **Stop No. 10: Controlling the River Flow**

Follow the roaring noise of the water down the steep road to the dam. Most of the water for the Rideau Canal comes from a number of reservoir lakes. The flow of water from these lakes and along the canal is controlled by a series of waste weirs and dams. Like Colonel By over 170 years ago, Parks Canada uses these dams to raise or lower water levels. This is done by using winches to adjust the number of stop logs in the dams. These water levels are regulated to meet a wide variety of needs, from navigation and natural habitat conservation, to hydro-electric and municipal water



supplies. In spring when there is more water flowing, more logs are removed.

**WARNING: DAMS CAN BE DANGEROUS. BE CAREFUL!**

### **Stop No. 11: Beech Nut Grove**

The silvery glade of American Beech is timeless. This beech species, while slow growing, can live for 200 years or longer. The beech is a medium-sized tree, with broad crowns, with a smooth, light bluish-grey bark, and large oval leaves. The beech nuts, popular with many birds and mammals, grow in pairs in bristly reddish-brown husks. Such a forest greeted Colonel By and future feet will tread this same path. Carve not, as deep cuts expose the tree's core to insects and disease.

### **Stop No. 12: The Upstream Tip: Pine and Hemlock Grove**

It took only six years to construct the Rideau Canal. The canal's effects on the human and natural history of the surrounding area are significant. It changed the natural environment it passed through and affected the lives of the settlers who were already here. It brought new settlers and commerce into areas which had been nothing but forests and wild rivers. Relax here awhile and try to imagine how this area must have looked over 170 years ago, before Colonel By's men tamed the rapids and cleared the forest. As you gaze towards the south end of the canal, consider the feat Colonel By accomplished in building the Rideau Canal.



Rest on the red chairs or on the brown bench provided to enjoy the view up the Rideau before you make your return journey.