



June 9 thru 24, 2010

THE ITHF CANADA TOUR and Rotary Convention of 2010

This tour is brought to you by Loren and Barbara Donaldson of the Westminster 7:10 Rotary Club of Westminster, Colorado, USA., and includes all the members of the International Travel and Hosting Fellowship tour working their way to the Rotary International Convention in Montreal, Canada. The following will be a day by day dialogue of some of the sights and sounds we experience on the way.

From the Beginning: To Toronto...



We left Denver early Wednesday morning and flew directly to Toronto, Canada. The three and a half hour flight was non-eventful and we arrived to an overcast,, rainy city. After a \$50 taxi ride from the airport we were free to spend the day as we wished. Fortunately, we found a city bus tour that was a hop on, hop off, anytime tour with a very nice sightseeing boat ride at the end.

At noon time we were able to attend a Rotary meeting at a local club. The lunch was held in a very nice retirement center nearby. Out of 40 members there were about 10 who made the meeting, with the ITHF group outnumbering the members 2 to 1. The lunch, on a scale of 1-10 was about a 5, although the tables were set with tablecloths and very nice china. The cost of the lunch did bring a clutch to our throats, however, at \$26 CAD each. The Australians in the group that that was about normal. Wow! And we thought we had it expensive.



Snuggled in our room at the Sutton Place hotel after the tour, we could look out over the city and see the Toronto skyline. Not much to look at, however. An open lot and a few tall buildings were the view of the day.



The next day, June 11th, we took the bus on a wonderful excursion to Niagara Falls, where the water from Lake Erie plummets almost 200 feet into Lake Ontario. We did the usual touristy things: took a boat ride on the Maid of the Mist and got soaked under the Canadian falls. Fortunately some of us used the provided ponchos to help us keep dry, The water from the falls was powerful it produced a drenching downpour of water. Hard to imagine. We stopped for a nice buffet lunch on the top floor of the Sheraton on Falls Hotel. We had an unobstructed view of the American side and Canadian sides of the falls. Beautiful. The weather was wonderful: sunny and warm, almost too warm.



After lunch we travelled on to Niagara-on-the-Lake on the north east side of Lake Ontario by way of the scenic Niagara Parkway alongside the river gorge.



Here in the bottom two pictures you see the clock tower in the main street and on the left a picture of main street with the bungalows of homes and shops surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens and flowering beds along the streets. A very delightful place to visit.

Upon return to Toronto we had the evening to enjoy with a dinner and an evening of doing the town.

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Ft. Henry Parade Grounds



Kingston historic Train Station



Sightseeing dinner cruise boat.



The next day, June 12th, we were treated to a breakfast at the CN (Canada National) Tower. Over 1500 feet high, it was the tallest tower in the world until the one just built in Dubai. There are 1776 steps in circular tower. We could look out and see a wonderful view of the whole city. Unfortunately, the fog had rolled in and we couldn't get a picture of any quality to include here.

After leaving the CN Tower we bussed our way to Kingston along Lake Ontario.

We visited the historic site of Old Fort Henry which was protecting the city of Kingston and the surrounding area since the early 1850's. The city was founded in 1763. It is the third oldest city in Canada.

Now the main support comes from tourists, the military, and retired folks who come to sail and play golf. There is also a big federal prison just outside of town.

After a day of sightseeing we are fortunate enough to enjoy a 3 hour dinner cruise on the boat seen here on the left. We had a delicious dinner and some wonderful entertainment as well as some beautiful scenery as the sun set on the Western islands. From the cruise we walked back to our hotel, the Four Points by Sheraton and had a very quiet and comfortable sleep. It was a long day.

Sunday, June 13th our journey continued from Kingston to Ottawa along the shoreline of the St. Lawrence River. After a two hour ride we reached the rebuilt Upper Canada Village in Morristown to learn how settlers lived in former times. Some of the buildings were reconstructed from all parts of Canada and moved here to this village. We saw wool processing on machines driven by water power on machines made in the 1850's. A main drive shaft ran under the floor and belts were attached to it that powered the machines that carded and spun the raw wool onto spools.

The saw mill carved 2 x 10 inch boards from large logs with one saw blade moving up and down using water power to drive the blade. And just smell the delicious freshly cut wood...mmmm. Next door was the woodworking shop where the wood was boiled and placed around pins to bend it to the shape to make chairs, benches and anything the carpenter wanted. Of course, there was modern snack bar where we sat for a while and enjoyed a Panini sandwich and soup. As we walked the dirt streets we saw a cart being pulled by two large oxen, a small working farm, and some other 19th century buildings. Life was certainly tough in those days.

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Ottawa Parliament



Museum of Civilization



Monday, June 14th (Happy Flag Day!) found us feasting on a wonderful American breakfast in the dining room of the Crowne Plaza Ottawa Hotel. We were headed to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Stables and Museum of Civilization.

Ottawa is not just the capital of the Canadian Government, it is also one of the most diverse cities in the world, offering everything from world-class sporting events and shopping adventures to museums and family activities. Ottawa has it all. Situated on the Ottawa River about 150 miles West of Montreal, Ottawa is a unique mix of old and new, history and technology, excitement and relaxation. Among the many sights in Ottawa are the Canadian War Museum, Parliament Hill, Rideau Hall, National Aviation Museum, Royal Canadian Mint, National Gallery, Byward Market with all kinds of food and goods for sale. After the tour of the RCMP museum we had time to visit downtown and the Byward Market where we had lunch. The afternoon was free and we were able to wander around and visit the other wonderful sights including the Museum of Civilization. The exhibits were so realistic one almost thought they were living in those times. To the right notice the old truck waiting to unload the train boxcar loaded with produce. The station is to the left and looked as if it were a working building. Very impressive.



Later we get a wonderful rest at the Crowne Plaza Ottawa Hotel.



Leaving Canada's capital behind we crossed the Ottawa Valley into the province of Quebec to reach Mont Tremblant National Park. This summer and winter resort has a lot to offer its visitors. There is a walking town, gondola ride to the top of the mountain with lunch at the top, a walk thru the town and free internet access. Yea!



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As we arrived in Quebec city we were able to take a 3 hour bus tour of the city. We learned that Quebec City was founded in 1608 by the French. Scottish and English settlers arrived in 1769. The word Quebec was an Algonquin Indian word that meant “where the river narrows”. 95% of the people in Quebec speak French. Currently there are about 1 million people in Quebec City. The picture to the left shows a typical street of shops, pedestrians and horse draws carriages.



The Farmers' Market is a very popular place for tourists. Located at the bank of the St. Lawrence

River, the flowers were in full bloom. Farmers from around the area brought in all kinds of fruits and vegetables, as well as meats, canned goods, etc.



Looking up from the river to the Old City we see a steep rail tram that will take passengers up the steep hillside.



From high atop the 22nd floor of the Hilton Hotel we look down on the Parliament building of Quebec province.

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While at the top of the Hilton Hotel in Quebec city we attended the meeting of the Quebec Rotary Club-East. Here we are exchanging club banners. There are about 19 Rotarians in the ITHF group and about 12 of them were privileged to attend this meeting. However, for those of us not speaking French, the meeting was a bit difficult to follow, although we did sing O Canada (in French).



This was the first church built in Quebec. We were told that the only city with an older church was on in St. Augustine, Florida.



Inside the church were the usual decorations and symbols associated with a church. The one unusual artifact was the model ship hanging from the ceiling. This ship is a replica of one that helped defend the city against a major attack by an early adversary. Somewhat unusual to see.

On Friday we will be arriving in Montreal by noon. We will then be gathering pictures to use in the next exciting episode of these journals.

THE ITHF CANADA TOUR 2010



The ITHF tour finished up with a final dinner at the beautiful Victoria Hotel in old town Quebec. The 20 members of the tour dined on a delicious salmon dinner. We reminisced the evening away talking about the great tour and the wonderful places we were able to visit. That even brought back memories of other tours we have taken last year and years past.



The highlight of the evening was the crowning of the most helpful, popular, wise and funny person that helped the most on the tour. There, of course, was only one possible choice. John Steven gave a lengthy introduction, as he is known to do, that reviewed all the attributes the recipient had to have in order to win the beautiful trophy. At the correct moment Rotarian Carolee Terpstra, last year's winner, presented the honorary stuffed moose to Russ Dale who was accompanied by his very charming wife, Joy (who probably did all the work to make this happen). Our sincerest congratulations to Russ for his wonderful award.



The next morning we gathered at the entrance of the beautiful Victoria Hotel in downtown Quebec to board the bus for the last ride of the tour. We will move on to the Montreal Convention Center and the 2010 Rotary International Convention.



THE ITHF CANADA TOUR and 2010 Rotary International Convention



Upon leaving Quebec city, we drive West following the St. Lawrence River. Some of the city of Montreal is on an island framed by the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers. The island is about 1 mile wide and 3 miles long. Of course, the city has spread way beyond the island and includes over 3.4 million people. There are a number of mountains (ok, hills) around the city that reach a little over 2,000 feet.

One very interesting fact we learned was that there is an underground city in the metro area. There is access to 7 major hotels, 2 rail stations, 200 restaurants and local condo apartments.

The language is bilingual, French and English (who would have guessed) which was made official in 1968 by the Parliament.

The major production areas are electronics, textiles, finance, shipping and food processing.



Here we see the beautiful St. Lawrence river as we cross over onto the Montreal island.



After a long morning of travel we arrive at the Le Dauphine hotel just one block from the Convention Center where the Rotary convention is to be held. We were able to register for the convention and take a look around the convention center, one very large place. Saturday we will be taking a boat tour along the St. Lawrence river and some other interesting activities. More to follow tomorrow.



THE ITHF CANADA TOUR and 2010 Rotary International Convention



Saturday, June 19th, 2010 found Rotarians from all over the world gathering and registering for the Convention. The convention hall is huge, taking up two city blocks. Fortunately our hotel is a mere short walk from the center. We don't have to ride busses back and forth to the hotel or convention. Very nice.

It is wonderful how many Rotarians we meet as we gather for breakfast, the opening of the House of Friendship and the 3 hour cruise on the St. Lawrence River. This photo shows the forward deck of the cruise boat after we had lunch on the inside decks. There must have been about 500 people crowded onto the decks. As usual the skies opened up right at the end of the event. We had to break out the umbrellas and fortunately found a taxi to take us back to the hotel. A very nice afternoon was had by all.



This same evening we had to scramble to get a 5 pm bus to take us to the next event. The National School of the Circus (L'Ecole nationale de cirque) was our next stop. Here you see the outside of the building where the performance took place. And what a show it was. Some wonderful performers made up a great show. At the end it brought the audience to its feet. Well done. As we travelled through Montreal to get to the performance we saw something somewhat unique to the area.

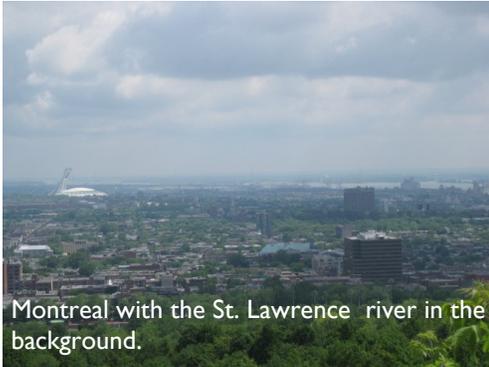


This photo shows the unique outdoor stair steps to the second floor apartments. There were so many instances of these steps in so many forms. Many were circular, some reached the first floor then circled up to the second floor. It did make the neighborhood look a bit scraggly, but the functionality far outpace the need for esthetics.

Sunday morning will see us take a city bus tour. When that is over we will attend the first opening Plenary session of the convention. More later.



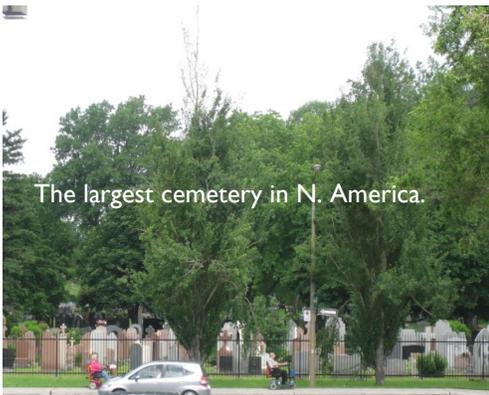
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Montreal with the St. Lawrence river in the background.



St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal



The largest cemetery in N. America.



Beautiful park at Westmount.

Sunday, June 20th, 2010

The day started with a very informative city tour of Montreal. Montreal, a variation on the name of the mountain on the island called Mt. Royal is a Constitutional Monarchy. The city was incorporated in 1832. In 1642 Catholic missionaries founded outposts in the area. They traded furs for a living. The missionary priests taught the natives who were nomads to farm.

Today there are 3.5 million people in the Montreal area. There are about 16 cities on the island of Montreal with Westmount being the most expensive in which to live. Housing cost an average of about \$1.5 million. Nice neighborhoods, too. The most famous church in the area is St. Joseph's Oratory. Brother Andrea started the church and will canonized a saint in October. Nearby is the largest Catholic cemetery in North America with over 1 million people buried here. There are many nationalities represented in Montreal. Chinatown was founded when the Chinese people were living here to help build the railroads. There is also the largest Haitian community in the world outside Haiti.

The main industries in Montreal are mining, forestry, special effects software for gaming, and scientific research.

Montreal has a vibrant underground city as well. There are over 400 miles of rubber wheeled trains that transport commuters to many of the businesses in the city. This subway system was opened in 1966. Most of the buildings are from the English era, after the French lost most of their historic buildings by fire or being destroyed by the English. They were great friends back then.

There are 4 newspapers in Montreal. Three are in French. The only English language newspaper is the Gazette.



We were amazed to find a public bicycle system in the city. One can rent a bicycle in one place and turn it in another. Each of the stations is solar powered, and bicycles can be rented with a credit card. A number of cities across the country as well as in the U.S. are buying these systems for themselves.



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After a very informative city bus tour of Montreal, 15,000 cheering Rotarians were welcomed at the Bell Center by RI President John Kenney. The picture on the left is one of five giant screens high over the arena welcoming the Rotarians to Montreal.

Below is a picture of the entertainment, after the speeches, featuring Celtic Thunder. This is a



quintet of very talented singers and band that gave a thundering performance of some amazing tunes. The show lasted at least an hour and a half and had the audience jumping to their feet after the show.



Of course, after a long hard day of listening to speeches and wonderful entertainment, and a long bus ride back to the hotel, we had to step out for an evening of fun and fellowship.

Close by is Montreal's China Town. We were able to walk to a highly recommended Chinese restaurant and enjoy an authentic Chinese meal. Joining Barbara and me are some exceptional Rotarians from Dallas, Texas. On the back row are yours truly and PDG, Gilbert Brown. In the front row are Tom, Linda Brown, with the carrot flower, Lois and Barbara Donaldson. In all, it was great day and a wonderful start to this 101st International Rotary Convention.



THE ITHF CANADA TOUR and 2010 Rotary International Convention

Monday, June 21st, started out with a very slow bus ride to the Bell Center for the opening Plenary session featuring Father Marciano Evangelista, founder of the Tuloy Foundation in Manila, Philippines, This foundation has takes in kids from the street and provides them direction to a fulfilling life. We also heard from Greg Mortenson, author of Three Cups of Tea, a book that describes his efforts to build schools in Afghanistan. His is an amazing story. President John also introduced the current board of directors, We also were introduced to the RI Past Presidents.



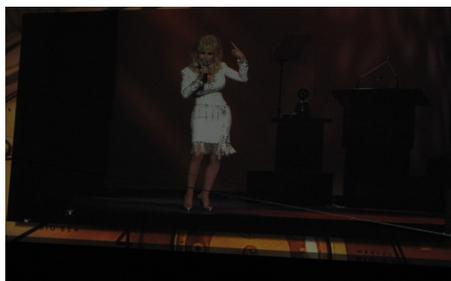
Following lunch at the Palis des congres, where all the breakout sessions were being held, we attended a class for Presidents Elect. The format included Incoming RI President, Ray Klinginsmith interviewing members of the RI Board about how they became Rotarians and what they thought would be the best advise for new incoming Club Presidents. Included in the panel was RI Past President Cliff Dochterman who asked "What is it that Rotary does?" Cliff reviewed the history of Rotary. He suggested that incoming Club Presidents are confused, and that, after his review, we would still be confused, but at a higher level. We spent the afternoon in the House of Friendship, where we visited the Shelter Box exhibit.



We were looking for a Rotary Logo to stand in front of so everyone could tell we were at the Rotary Convention, but the only thing we could find was a wildlife display. Here we found a friendly moose to greet us and say goodbye. This guy wasn't very friendly, however, because he was stuffed. Didn't move a muscle, and stood there all day long. Later that afternoon we make our way back to the Bell Center



along with a few other Rotarians to close out the conference with an amazing show. The end of the convention came with a blast. There were about 9 thousand people that filled the Bell Center for the closing ceremonies. After some closing words we were introduced to Dolly Parton, who put on a wonderful show of songs and interviews. She told us about her Imagination Library which distributes books to kids up to the 5th grade. She recently marked the 25 millionth book.



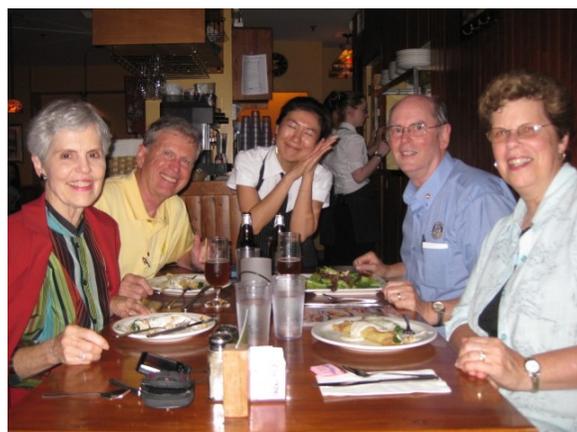


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This picture is a small representation of the thousands of folks who made their way to the Bell Center. After the President made his closing remarks we were wonderfully entertained for over an hour by the Cirque du Soleil. Brilliant show! Very well done.

After the closing ceremony we headed to old town Montreal Which was just a few short blocks from our hotel. There we found a wonderfully quaint French restaurant the specialized in Crepes. And they were delicious. We even had Crepe Suzettes for dessert. Our wonderful French waitress, Karen, even took our picture from outside on the sidewalk, through the window. Another waitress helped fill in the picture. Our guests at the table (l-r) are Linda and PDG Gilbert Brown from Dallas, Texas.



Finally the convention was over.

We headed for the airport on a State holiday. The roads were absolutely empty. Normally it would have taken at least an hour to make the trip, but we did it in about 15 minutes. Were we lucky.

The 2010 Rotary International Convention was now a fond memory. We learned so much about what is happening in Rotary these days. So many breakout session were held that it kept one busy the whole time we were there.

This is the end of this epistle. I hope you've been able to get a bit of the flavor of 18,000 Rotarians enjoying a few days getting to know Montreal, and a few new friends. If I could say Good By in French I would, so I will just say it in English. Good By and thanks for reading.

Th, Th, That's all, Folks!