

Le déchainé

Le Grand Tour | Sunday August 4, 2024

Between ephemeral and solid

By Jonathan B. Roy

I'm impressed. "I don't mind the heat," many of you proudly exclaimed, your foreheads watering and your cheeks flushed. One thing's for sure, many of you prefer the boiling mercury to the cold rain.

The excitement of the start helped. In the courtyard of the orange-and-brown Plantagenet High School - nicknamed the giant A&W in the region - the first names of people who had met up were flying. "Pascal! Josée!"

The vacations were starting for many. Myriam shared with me that she had hardly ridden at all before arriving here. That's okay, we've got a week to get up to speed.

Even Dji, the head massage therapist, launched into an improvised poem when he saw me. "Write it down, it was really beautiful!" Sadly, I didn't have my phone with me. You'll have to make an appointment with him for more. It's the ephemerality of these moments that makes them precious.

Along the way, Pierre, Claude and Yvon pedaled gently, gazing out over

the Ottawa River. After the Petite Aventure, this is the first Grand Tour for two of them. "There's no point in arriving at 1:30 p.m., we take our time!"

Others were already taking advantage of the detours. The lanky Thomas and François are doing them all. The former is accompanied again this year by his

grandfather, a 70-year-old backpacker, and the latter by his father, Christian, whom the second son will join for a day on Monday.

Ontario's asphalt helped keep up the pace. For at least 12 years, the municipal government of Prescott-Russell has systematically paved all its roads with a wide shoulder. A third more expenditure, but the result is a road that's more resistant and, above all, ideal for cyclists.

Asphalt, unlike poetry, gains nothing from being ephemeral.



who was 78 at the time and rode every day. It made a big impression on me to see that you could be such a sportsman right up to his age." For the next 12 years, Gilles was head massage therapist at Vélo Québec events. "I stopped because I couldn't see the summers go by anymore." He's back this year, with a group of seven, and only for the fun part.

Warren is part of a group of 10, all from the Toronto area. This number even benefited from the registration discount.

Christina, from Alexandria in Eastern Ontario, was particularly smiling, even after falling off her bike while stuck on her new automatic pedals. It'll take more than that to keep her from enjoying her first Grand Tour, solo and camping. "I love the all-inclusive concept," she pointed out, "and especially that someone else is preparing my meals!"

In the heat of the day, the hail and rain of the evening, the Grand Tour 2024 is officially launched.

Photo 1: Michel, Christian and son François, in front of the Lefavre ferry. Photo 2 : Jacques, Hélène, Marc, Marie-Claude at the lunch stop



In fact, the most magical stretch of road of the day - and I'm not making this up - was the little section before lunch, on Old Montreal Road. A fine tribute to the streets of the metropolis!

In the afternoon, Gilles confided in me that he had cycled the first four Grand Tours. "The first year, I was 31 and I met Maurice,



Read the Déchainé online
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On the road

Regular route (83 km)

Between Gatineau and Wakefield, the site of today's lunch stop, you'll follow the Gatineau River, the focus of today's itinerary, from near or far. Just outside Chelsea, you'll reach Chemin de la Rivière, where you'll enjoy superb views all the way to Wakefield. The final stretch promises to be particularly beautiful, as you follow the Ottawa River along section #1 of the Route verte back to the village. **Rest stop:** km 26, in Chelsea.

Lunch stop, km 40, Wakefield

Enjoy lunch at Centre Wakefield La Pêche before heading out for the afternoon. Taste the cheese of the day, courtesy of Fromages d'ici: Fromage Louis d'Or (Fromagerie du

Presbytère).

Gravel route (83 km)

Today's gravel route follows the regular route for most of the day, but offers you the chance to break away from the pack for a few gravel escapade. In the afternoon, you can follow the Gatineau River at close quarters!

Short loop (76 km)

On this short loop, which cuts 7 km off your day, you'll find yourself back on the Gatineau River after passing through Cantley, instead of continuing east. You'll follow the river to its junction with the Ottawa River, before covering the last few kilometers of the day on Route verte section #1.

Option 1 (+26 km)

Need to work up an appetite before dinner? Take the optional route when you arrive in Wakefield and discover the wilderness roads between Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham and Lascelles before reaching the lunch stop along another stretch of the Gatineau River.

Water on the course

The days are warm during this Grand Tour! If you don't have enough water and need a drink, signal one of our support vehicles and they'll be able to refill your bottles.



At the Gatineau village

The Grand Tour turns 30!

À At 5:00 p.m. in the bistro, don't miss the discussion between Michel Labrecque and Jean-François Rheault! The former and current CEOs of Vélo Québec will look back at the history of the Grand Tour, from its creation in 1995 to its 30th anniversary this year, as well as the event's importance in creating a cycling culture in Quebec.

A musical evening

After the talk at the bistro, round off the evening in style at the same venue with music from the group La boîte à chansons from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.

Décathlon play area

From 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., come and try out several outdoor games (spikeball, badminton, archery and Finnish bowling) supplied by Décathlon!

Pool access

From 10:30 a.m. to 3:50 p.m., at the Centre sportif de Gatineau. Admission: \$10 for adults, \$5 for children under 5 and adults 65+.

Siboire, the Grand Tour's official beer

Come and enjoy a good beer from Siboire, the official beer of the Grand Tour, every day in the bistro from 3 p.m.

Tourisme Outaouais

Want to find out more about the region's tourist attractions? Visit the Tourisme Outaouais booth between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

Escape Café

Need a caffeine fix before or after your ride? Escape Café will be open at the village from 6:30 to 10 a.m., and again during the afternoon.

Massage therapy

Reserve your massage therapy session in advance by texting Djilali Aïcha at (514) 991-1822 with your choice of time slot.

***** Want to have lunch in the village tomorrow? Mention it to the person in charge when you're in line to pick up your dinner, or at the info booth before 9:00 p.m.**



Services

Info booth and boutique

From 6:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Mechanical booth

From 6:30 to 10 a.m.

From 2:00 to 7:00 p.m.

First aid

From 7 to 10 a.m. and from 2 to 10 p.m.

Massage therapy

From 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (lunch)

From 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. (St-Joseph College)



Today's menu

Your breakfast - from 6 to 9 a.m.

- > Florentine quiche, sausages/veggie sausages, bacon/blackened beans
- > Bridgehead raspberry scone, homemade potatoes with fresh herbs

Your meal at the lunch stop - from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

- > Egg and mushroom club sandwich/sautéed mushrooms and almonds
- > Broccoli, almond, cranberry and ranch salad, celery stick
- > Oatmeal raisin cookie, fresh fruit

Your dinner -from 5 to 9 p.m.

- > Cabbage salad, roasted tomato soup, tricolored roasted potatoes
- > Grilled chicken breast with orange sauce, vegetable diced casserole
- > Ice cream cup, fresh fruits



GRAND TOUR

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DECATHLON

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Le Grand Tour,
an event by

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