

The Trails are Calling!

“Take a quiet walk with Mother Nature. It will nurture your mind, body and soul.”

- Antony Douglas Williams, Canadian Writer.

Spring has sprung. The snow is melting, the birds are returning, and the daffodils will soon be poking their green stalks through the ground. And after this long Bruce County winter, what better way to shake off cabin fever than by getting outside and walking, hiking, running or cycling some of the – literally – thousands of kilometers of Bruce County trails.

You won't be alone in your pursuit, either.

Trail use is recognized as one of the top recreational pursuits in Ontario. According to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, over 20 percent of Ontarians walk, run, trek and cycle the province's trail systems each year. And the number is growing annually. Bruce County is no exception. Every year thousands of residents and visitors alike make use of the area's wealth of natural pathways to commune with the great outdoors while improving their cardiovascular health, reducing stress, and even boosting their mood.

And the County has no end of trails to choose from. Be it the world renowned, 1300 km Bruce Trail that winds its way up the Niagara Escarpment, or the one km path that wraps around Fairy Lake in Southampton, hikers can get lost in Nature for an entire day or just an hour. Below is a sampling of what is on offer for those looking to get outside this spring and summer.

“Walking is man's best medicine.” – Hippocrates.

The Bruce Trail. Canada's oldest and longest marked footpath, the Bruce Trail offers an array of ways to explore the natural beauty of the Niagara Escarpment ... on foot.

The brainchild of pioneer conservationist Ray Lowes, the vision was to create a trail that stretched from Niagara to Tobermory. Lowe got his wish. Working with provincial and local governments, private landowners, and like-minded volunteers, land approvals were obtained, trails constructed, and, in 1963, the Bruce Trail Association was incorporated. People have been traipsing the trail ever since. And whether you explore it on an afternoon hike or undertake the challenge of trekking it from end-to-end, walking the Bruce Trail is well worth the steps!

Bruce County Rail Trail. Stretching 80 km, the Bruce County Rail trail extends from the Bruce Power nuclear facility

up to Port Elgin, and from Port Elgin through the towns of Paisley, Walkerton and Mildmay. Built on railway lines that were used for train travel in the late 1800s and the first half of the 1900s, the Bruce County Rail Trail is a multi-use track that takes users past quiet farmlands, down wooded paths and alongside the Saugeen River. The Rail Trail has multiple access points and even boasts parking, outhouses, and benches along the route for taking breathers.

Kincardine Trails. For the past 25 years, the Kincardine Trails Association (KTA) has been helping local residents and visitors connect with Nature – one trail at a time. Formed from existing horse and cow paths, former railway lines, historic passageways and newly developed corridors, the stunning trail system takes users through, around and over the woods, ponds, rivers and neighbourhoods of Kincardine.

Broken into six distinct trails, the walkways provide challenges for every level of fitness. Walkers, runners and cyclists can traverse the **KIPP Trail**, trekking and pedaling up the Lake Huron coast from Kincardine to Inverhuron Provincial Park. Those choosing the Blue, Red and Green Trails can travel through ravines, along the banks of the Penetangore River, and past ponds where they'll glimpse dam-building beavers and nesting ducks. Then there is the Pink Trail, which takes users past the Kincardine lighthouse and Huron shoreline's oldest

standing dance hall, the Pavilion; not to mention the still visible skeletal hull of the Anna Maria, a schooner that went to her watery grave in 1902. And for ornithologists, the Yellow trail loops through a bird watcher's paradise.

“An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day.”

- Henry David Thoreau

And there are countless other trails to traverse in Bruce County. You can stroll from beach to beach along the **Shipley Trail**, connecting the Port Elgin Main Beach to Gobbles Grove Beach. Walk the wooded areas of Port Elgin along the **Biener Bush Trails**. Spot snapping turtles, ducks and swans – as well a number of tree carvings that some say were

whittled by forest nymphs – on the scenic walkway that loops around Fairy Lake in Southampton.

There's the **North Shore Trail** that offers walkers, runners and cyclists breathtaking views of the Lake Huron shoreline as well as Chantry Island and its 165-year-old Imperial Lighthouse. The **Saugeen Rail Trail** that runs from Southampton to Port Elgin before connecting up with the Bruce Rail Trail. The list goes on.

So this spring and summer get out there and traverse beautiful Bruce County. Be it a leisurely stroll with the family, or a challenging hike with the walking group, there are pathways for all here. Just remember to wear comfortable walking shoes, pack plenty of water, take nothing but pictures ... and leave only footprints behind.

The trails are calling to you.



by Doug Archer