

# HIKING AND CAMPING

## Waking Up Summer

By Lorraine Payette

It just wouldn't be summer in our region without camping and hiking.

Communing with nature, sleeping in tents and cabins, walking trails from sweet and simple through rugged and challenging, are part of what the warm weather is all about.

"We are blessed in this area to have so many wonderful places to hike, right here in our own backyards," said Trail Master Peter Murray at the official grand opening of the Riverside and Narrows Loops on the Lions Section of the Gananoque Trails in 2010.

These words still hold true. Leeds-Grenville has well over 650 Km's of trails and thousands of acres of land available for exploring. Whether hiking for fitness or serious adventure, there will be something to fit everyone's needs.

Fitness trails can be found at the Bay of St. Lawrence Park on Island Drive in the Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands (TLTI), and the Seeley's Bay Vita Parcours Trail on Cranberry Lake. They include fitness stations, benches, board walks and bridges, with a low to medium level of difficulty.

For more of a challenge, there are places like the Gananoque Trail System, Landon Bay Walking Trails, and the trails at Bellamy Park Family Campground on Bellamy Lake (just west of Toledo, Ontario). Still easy enough for beginners, they wind through breathtaking scenery and give a chance to get up close to nature.

Experienced hikers will find what they like at places like the Cataraqi Trail, a four-season hiking area open to cyclists, cross-country skiers, hikers, snowshoers, equestrians and snowmobilers. Following the former Canadian National Railway

system, it extends 104 Kms from Strathcona to Smiths Falls, passing through Eel Bay and Chaffey's Lake, while crossing the Frontenac Axis.

For something a bit different in hiking, there are activities like the Rockport Heritage Walking Tour. A self-guided excursion, participants can walk from site to site throughout the historic village, reading signs and looking at murals, all the while getting exercise as they learn about this fascinating settlement.

Many hiking trails are located at campgrounds throughout the region. Thousand Islands National Park is the only national park in Ontario that features ten oTENTiks which can be reserved and used by campers. A cross between a cabin and a tent, five are located on the mainland at Mallorytown Landing, three on McDonald Island and two on Gordon Island.

Camping is also available with sites fitted for trailers/RVs or tents at Landon Bay, Ivy Lea Campground and Misty Isles Lodge. These are just three of the more than 25 campgrounds listed at the Leeds-Grenville camping and accommodations website, with more being listed all the time.

"Camping is an institution in Leeds and Grenville," said John MacLeod of Landon Bay. "We aim to give people what they want in an experience with nature, while providing enough amenities to keep them comfortable at all times." **LH**



Whether alone or in organized groups, hiking can be fun for everyone.

The oTENTiks at Thousand Islands National Park are just one of many great options for summer camping. L-r, MP Gord Brown, Leeds-Grenville; Kim St. Claire, Field Unit Superintendent, Georgian Bay and Eastern Ontario, Parks Canada; Mayor Roger Haley of Front of Yonge and Jeff Leggo, Superintendent Thousand Islands National Park

For more information on camping and hiking in Leeds-Grenville be sure to go to <http://www.leedsgrenville.com/en/visit/thingstodo/HikingTrails.asp>, [www.frontenacarchbiosphere.ca](http://www.frontenacarchbiosphere.ca) and <http://www.leedsgrenville.com/en/visit/accommodations/Camping.asp>. The county is yours to explore and enjoy.