



## Make plans to be at TROC January 1st

As 2017 draws to a close, it is time to think about the New Year. Our tradition of a "Toast to the Rest of Canada" continues. We will again meet at the Island View Beach for the event, details are below.

**1:00 pm:** Meet at Island View Beach: meet, swap stories, take a dip (for the hardy), toast, and group photo

**2:00 pm:** Travel to/Arrive at Bob's for chili, coffee, more stories, and motorcycle videos

Dress warm for the beach activities and bring a suitable libation for the toast. Cameras are welcome! Coffee, tea and some soft drinks

will be available at Bob's. There will be meat and vegetarian chillis and a carrot cake for those with a sweet tooth.

For those that don't wish to meet for the toast at the beach, they can proceed directly to Bob's house at 2227 Amelia Avenue in Sidney

Directions to Bob's: North on Pat Bay Highway, exit right on McDonald Park Road (first exit after Beacon Avenue in Sidney). Take immediate right onto Ardwell Avenue. Proceed to stop sign, then turn right on Bowerbank Road. Take third exit at small traffic circle onto Amelia Avenue. Our house is



down approximately 1 ½ blocks on right.

**PLEASE RSVP** by December 29 so that we can make enough chilli. RSVP to [bleitch@telus.net](mailto:bleitch@telus.net)

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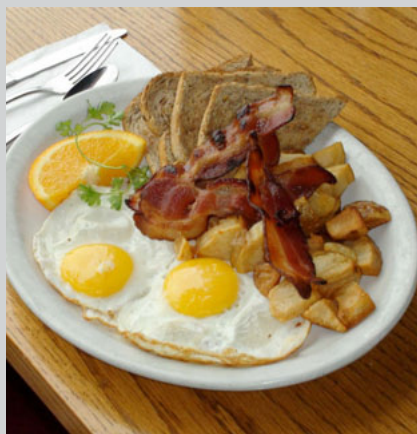
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## Next Breakfast/Brunch

### Saturday, January 6



### WHERE:

Cherries Breakfast Bistro  
4144 Wilkinson Road  
Victoria, BC

### WHEN:

9:30 am at the restaurant



## A Gravel Odyssey: Final Part of Riding Labrador

By Geoff Stevenson  
(Last of three instalments)

Our next stop was Churchill Falls and that controversial hydro-electric power plant. The Labrador Highway was now paved – and a bit like riding the Prairies, mostly straight and flat. Light traffic, too – I doubt we saw more than 50 vehicles on the four-hour ride from Goose Bay.

The Churchill Falls dam, which then boasted the world's farthest-underground power house (about a thousand feet) was built in the early 1970s by Joey Smallwood's Newfoundland government, but most of the electricity it generates is sold to Quebec Hydro.

And there's the rub: Newfoundland complains that Quebec now buys the power for far below the market price; Quebec counters that a deal's a deal and that the price cannot be increased.

Clearly the existing arrangement (Quebec's profit so far is \$26 billion, Newfoundland's just \$2 billion) is good for Hydro Quebec, not so much for Nalcor, the Newfoundland company that runs the plant. The case has run through the courts for years; so far Newfoundland has always lost. However, the Supreme Court of Canada has recently agreed to hear a further appeal.



**Geoff's trusty Ford Ranger carried both bikes in style for just over 10,000km.**

If this fails, Newfoundland will have to wait until 2041, when the original contract expires and can be re-negotiated.

But here's some good news from Churchill Falls: It boasts what may be Canada's best housing deal. If you work for Nalcor, you qualify for company-provided housing (there are no privately-owned homes in town) for between \$65 and \$90 a month – and that includes utilities!

Now we were nearing the western border of Labrador. The next day we rode into Labrador City and decamped at the Dexter Inn (fortunately booked in the spring –

because it was now full).

I had assumed this would be just another tourist hotel. In fact it was a new building and was really a fancy work camp. Most rooms had just one bed (we knew this in advance); Ernie generously volunteered to sleep on the sofa bed, reminding me that I'd done the same thing when we had a similar room in Bisbee, AZ., some years earlier.

We found accommodation in both Newfoundland-Labrador and Quebec expensive. A room with two beds averaged around \$135 (including taxes) on this trip, a far



# Geoff expounds on the lack of an IPA



***The Bella Desgagnes pulls into Natashquan to start our 44-hour ferry ride to Blanc Sablon.***

cry from the \$50-60US we are used to paying at Motel 6 in the Excited States.

The Dexter Inn was a deal. The rate was still around \$135, but this included supper and breakfast. The food was excellent: Supper was stuffed pork tenderloin, which might have been our best meal of the trip. Choice of several desserts, too – and unlimited returns to the serving area for a second (or third) main course.

(There had been plenty of return visits, judging by the bulging bellies we saw hanging over the belts of a number of young men staying there).

No alcohol available (a sensible choice, we reckoned), but choice of tea, coffee, milk and several juices to wash the food down. It was a serious cooked breakfast, too

– none of the day-old doughnuts and stale coffee masquerading as a “continental breakfast” at some places we’ve stayed.

We had an afternoon to spare, so decided to walk around Labrador City (pop. about 9,000). This uncovered some interesting neighborhoods with a wide cross-section of housing – and what may have been the world’s least-qualified barmaid.

After 5 or six kilometres on foot, we knew we were about halfway around the route, so decided to stop at a pub. I asked the young lady behind the counter whether she had an IPA in stock. She looked at me blankly and asked plaintively: “What’s an IPA?”

I knew the selection on tap was limited to three mainstream brews, so asked if I could look in the

refrigerator behind the counter. She agreed and I unearthed a bottle of Alexander Keith IPA, brewed in the Maritimes.

I rated it about C minus, with little of the hoppiness India Pale Ale is known for. (If you’d like a good IPA, try Fat Tug, brewed locally).

After another 5-6km we were suitably exercised and back at the Dexter Inn, ready for some of that stuffed pork tenderloin.

Next morning, Murphy had returned. It was raining hard as we prepared to leave Labrador and ride into eastern Quebec. But there was no fog this time, although the thermometer was barely over 10deg.

After 150km of Quebec gravel



***We dined in style aboard the Bella. Three choices of main courses, too.***



# Hot chicken soup hits those cold spots



***Harrington Harbour, an isolated fishing village on Quebec's North Shore, welcomed us with sunshine.***

(not as smooth as Labrador, but not too bad, albeit muddy and slippery in places in the rain) and 225km of pavement, we arrived at Manic Cinq, one of Hydro Quebec's biggest dams (and one of four on the Manicouagan River).

Between Lab City (as the locals know it) and Manic Cinq, we stopped at Relais-Gabriel for gas. This was the most expensive fuel

of the trip: \$1.70/litre. ( It seemed the three waitresses at the little restaurant attached to the gas station may have been holding an internal tattoo contest; among them they might have had more tattoos and piercings than the entire Canadian Navy. But I digress: The hot chicken noodle soup was just what we needed after the cold and wet ride from Lab. City).

The next day's ride was the best of the trip (it's too bad Highway 389 north of Baie Comeau is so damn far from Victoria). We were on small bikes and puttering along at 85-90km/h. But on a bike with more horsepower, this stretch of pavement and its dozen of sweepers would have been the equal of anything I'd ridden around the world.



# Tight ferry forces passengers to walk on



***A latter-day Viking checks out L'Anse aux Meadows, where the Vikings landed a thousand years ago.***

At Forestville, we crossed the St. Lawrence again and rode west from Rimouski on the South Shore.

Again, BC Ferries seemed a long way away. This ferry was a 140-foot aluminum catamaran built in nearby Quebec City, powered by water jets and designed to cruise at 30 knots. It held just 30 vehicles; boy, were they a tight fit.

They were parked so close to each other that there was room to open only the driver's door. This meant that all car passengers walked on and off the ferry because there was room in each vehicle for only the

driver. Even parking our bikes was a challenge, since there was so little room that dismounting for our old legs was hard work.

We spent a night in Montmagny on the South Shore and next day were back in St Roch, where the truck awaited.

Highway 132 took us beside hundreds of farms, many of them dairy operations. This meant, unsurprisingly, that we also passed dozens of milk and cheese factories.

These farmers are among the strongest supporters of Canada's dairy marketing system. This is

undoubtedly a great deal for the farmers – but not so good for the consumer. It's also a system under attack during the current NAFTA renegotiations; this consumer hopes it doesn't survive.

From the road we saw acres (hectares?) of emerald green grass for those cows, plus cereals (wheat, oats and barley), soybeans, apple orchards (and attached cideries) and other vegetables (mainly potatoes).

And we saw churches. And churches. And.....

We rode through dozens of small



# Churches adorn the many little towns

towns. In most cases you could see the steeple/steeple of the village church long before the lower speed limit and the town arrived. Many were spectacular buildings, monuments to the power the Roman Catholic church exerted in Quebec for so long. (Hard to believe, it's only about 60 years since this power was finally loosened by the Quiet Revolution, led by Premier Jean Lesage).

Many of the houses we passed were built long before there was Highway 132. Indeed, several towns boasted of being founded in the 1720's. The result is that many front doors are only 10-15 feet from the road and, in some cases, there's a hydro pole between the front door and the oncoming traffic. We rode carefully with these challenges.

Back in St Roch, we re-loaded the bikes in the truck and got an early night, ready for the drive home.

Going east, we had taken I90 from Seattle and driven through Washington, Idaho, Montana, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York

states before crossing the Canadian border just north of Plattsburg, NY.

Coming home, we allowed six days instead of five, but spent more time in Canada. From St Roch, we drove through Montreal and then headed northwest up the Ottawa Valley.

After a night in Sudbury, ON., we crossed the border again at the Soo and stopped at the Aerostich store in Duluth, MN. Eventually we got on I94 and headed through North Dakota, before re-joining I90 near Billings, MT.

Total distance in the truck was 10,020km (it never missed a beat). We rode 4,896km on the bikes – I reckon this equates to around 30,000km on a more comfortable seat.



**Fortunately, the only moose we saw on the ride was this fiberglass fellow in Rocky Harbour, NL.**

A section of gravel north of Port-Hope Simpson was being paved by the Labrador government as we rode by. Current plans call for the remaining 310km of gravel to be blacktopped in two or three years. Mind you, with Newfoundland's current financial woes, this may yet be delayed.

If you like gravel roads (and a sense of being on one of Canada's frontiers), you need to go soon. If you'd like to borrow some maps, we can help.

## Club 2017-18 Event Schedule

Date	Event	Location
Monday, January 1, 2018	TROC	Island View Beach & Bob's House
Saturday, January 6, 2018	Monthly Gathering	Cherries Breakfast Bistro
Sunday, February 4, 2018	Monthly Gathering	Beach House Restaurant