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Vacation time

by BRIAN LOCKHART

It's mid-summer in Ontario, and that, of course, means vacation time.

Yeah! It's your chance to book off work for a couple of weeks, and do something else for a change and hopefully relax or something.

While you can have fun in Ontario during the winter, it's the fact that we have a relatively short summer period that makes people really want to get out and enjoy some warm weather fun.

For a lot of people, that means ?going to the cottage.?

It doesn't matter whether the cottage is actually owned by your in-laws, or you put in a 1/50 share to buy it with a whole gaggle of your relatives, it gives you the right to say, ?We're going to the cottage for the weekend,? to impress your co-workers.

Even the radio station Q-107 ran a blurb about this a while ago: ?The ?going to the cottage' lady ? we get it, you have a cottage.?

I'm not much of a cottage guy. I certainly like being up in Muskoka and visiting the lakes and small towns that go from 500 people in the winter to 10,000 in summer, but cottage life itself, I'm not so sure about.

The last time I was invited to spend the weekend at a friend's cottage near Gravenhurst, I showed up with fishing gear, hiking boots, and bug spray, hoping for an event filled outdoor weekend catching bass and fighting off mosquitoes.

The weekend turned out to be a bunch of people sitting around and drinking beer all day long, listening to ?classic rock? on an overly loud stereo, and doing no physical activity at all. If I wanted to get drunk and listen to record albums from the 70s, I could have saved the two-hour trip and done it at home.

When I decided to do some fishing, I got a lot of eye rolls, as if I'm new at this and real cottagers don't go fishing.

Finally, someone decided we should take the boat out for a ride. Terrific!

Except when we piled in the boat, I realized our captain had been drinking steadily since 8:00 a.m., and one woman was sitting in a rear seat with her one-year-old child on her lap with no life jacket.

I brought up the fact that you can't take a toddler on a boat unprotected like that. The mother did realize her mistake, however I got a lot of scowls from the rest of the crew because now they had to go to the extra effort of finding a life jacket for the baby.

Somehow I became the bad guy because there was no way I was going to be involved in some accident that resulted in a baby being tossed overboard from a fast moving boat driven by a cockeyed captain.

I was told ?everyone here does it,? as an excuse for piloting a watercraft through a rocky lake while under the influence.

I never accepted another invitation to the cottage.

A lot of people enjoy summer road trips, although I think the current price of gas may be putting some people off of that long-anticipated trip to Cape Breton.

Road trips are a lot of fun. Ontario alone has a huge amount of places you can visit. From the shoreline of Lake Huron, to the north

shore of Lake Erie, there is lots to see. You can head east to Prince Edward County and see Lake Ontario in a whole different light, or head to Niagara-on-the-Lake and tour a winery.

I like seeing it all when I'm on the road. If I see a sign for something unusual, more often than not, I'll go see it.

If there's a sign stating ?World's Biggest Ball of Twine ? Five Miles? with an arrow pointing the way, I'll probably make the turn and go see the result of some guy who spent his entire life collecting twine to turn into a roadside tourist attraction.

There's a list of road trips I'd like to make across North America. Some are day trips, others require a couple of weeks.

Not everyone feels the same about tourist stops.

I checked some reviews on well known places and found: Grand Canyon - ?Every 500 feet a new vantage point of the same thing ? a big hole in the ground.? Yellowstone: ?If you've seen one geyser, you've seen them all.? Killarney Provincial Park: ?Not good in poor weather.? CN Tower: ?I paid $100 for me and two kids to go up an elevator and look out a window.?

Choose your destination wisely, and at least try to have fun.