



The Thousand Islands is a rich paddling destination with endless day and extended trips through quiet back bays, meandering channels, and thrilling open waters. The routes described in this guide represent some of the best areas for paddlers to begin their explorations in the fantastic Garden of the Great Spirit.

Paddlers will enjoy premiere island and mainland campsites, beaches and trails. The inns and restaurants of the historic Thousand Islands villages beckon travelers to stay and discover the hidden past of this legendary place.

**1000 islands**  
water trail



# Introduction

## 1000 islands water trail

### **ABOUT THE GUIDE BOOK**

The Thousand Islands Water Trail is divided into 9 paddling routes, organized to follow the flow of the river from Kingston, in the west, to Brockville, in the east. They are somewhat artificial in that the river can be paddled in any direction and in thousands of combinations. Routes are constructed as half-day and full-day excursions and directly abut one another to allow for extended tripping. **Printing this Introduction and Routes 1-9 will give you a complete guide book.** The maps are most useful if you arrange to print them in colour. **Detailed listings of camping, marinas, outfitters and on-shore accommodation are updated regularly and can be printed directly from the web site.**

### **DAYTRIPPING**

The Thousand Islands are a wonderful place for daytripping, offering convenient half-day and full-day excursions along its length. Do not under-estimate the planning required for a short trip and be prepared for an extended stay if conditions worsen or other challenges arise. Day paddlers must carry all gear listed as required equipment, and should prepare for unexpected circumstances by following the recommendations provided for extended tripping.

### **EXTENDED TRIPPING**

Wear a drytop or full wetsuit to ensure warmth in the event of capsizing. The Victoria Day weekend in May is the unofficial opening day for boating in the islands. The summer season is in full swing by June when the average air temperature on the islands is 15 C and the water reaches 11-12 C. In August the average air and water temperatures rises to 21 C and 18-19 C. Some of the nicest paddling days greet September trippers,



## 1000 ISLANDS WATER TRAIL

Suggested routes for each section of the river are identified on map(s) that accompany the route descriptions. Where the recommended route is a wide path, paddlers can be confident to travel anywhere within the highlighted area. When it narrows, paddlers are strongly urged to follow the highlighted route to avoid potential hazards. These routes are one possible way to explore the area. Adjust them to suit weather and water conditions, time constraints and your abilities and preferences.

- 1 Kingston Isles
- 2 Bateau Channel
- 3 Admiralty Islands
- 4 Kingston Isles
- 5 Lake Fleet Islands
- 6 Raft Narrows
- 7 Grenadier Island
- 8 Mallorytown Landing
- 9 Brock Isles

and if you are prepared for cold-water travel and frosty evenings, the sunny days in October await adventurous paddlers.

Paddlers planning extended tripping should take into account the direction and strength of the water's current and the winds that create its chop. The prevailing winds in the Thousand Islands are westerly. With the large fetch on Lake Ontario to the southwest, winds gather speed and power over the big water, and are funneled through the river valley. Winds tend to build through the day due to the sea breeze effect. The sun heats the land causing the air to rise, pulling the cooler air off the lake and river. This effect is reversed as evening approaches, when the land temperature falls and eventually becomes cooler than the water. A gentle land breeze often blows through the island pines overhead at night. Thunderstorms are infrequent in the Thousand Islands, however they can build very rapidly and are often very powerful. Get off the water if you suspect a storm is approaching, and find shelter under one of the picnic shelters (usually located within a few strides of the docks in the centre of an island).

Water currents only pose a challenge for paddlers in a few isolated locations on the St. Lawrence. Swift currents will be encountered at the Raft Narrows and International Rift. Just off Ivy Lea, the river narrows and as the flow is funneled, the velocity of the current increases. The International Rift is a tiny, winding route that pulls vessels downriver between Hill and Wellesley Islands and into the shallow, sheltered Lake of the Isles. Despite its name, the Raft Narrows is actually the wider passage on the river at Ivy Lea, only presenting challenging currents above Georgina, Constance and Rabbit Islands. The channel that lies north of Georgina Island is home to the Thousand Islands sill, the cause of the boiling waters for which the area is famous. At that point, the riverbed far below the water's surface drops over a giant underwater waterfall. The swirling waters can quickly alter your course and may unexpectedly hurl a vessel port or starboard. The river drops from a depth of roughly 10 m to more than 70 m over the course of a few paddle strokes. Paddlers heading downstream should be aware of these potential hazards, but should be able to navigate the route by staying close to shore (hugging the mainland as you pass beneath the International Bridge to avoid the bubbling, swirling current created by the Thousand Islands sill). Those heading upstream should also stay close to shore, and expect tough paddling through this section.

Overnight arrangements may entail camping or accommodations at bed and breakfasts, inns, or hotels and motels along the river corridor. Reservations should certainly be made well in advance for all accommodations. Keep in mind, island camping at the sites maintained by St. Lawrence Islands National Park is first come-first served. Be sure to arrive early to a site, especially if there are few island camping options on the route you are paddling. Camping on the mainland at private establishments and at Ivy Lea Campground should be booked well in advance.

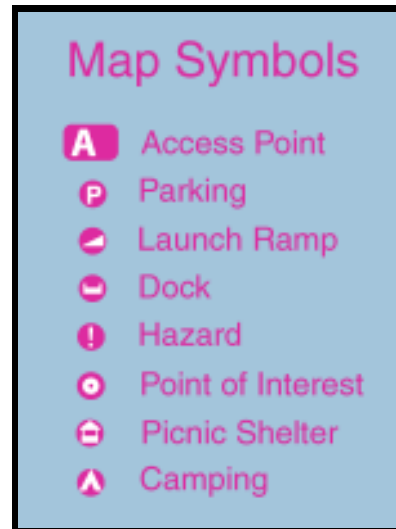
It is necessary to be continuously conscious of the need for contingency planning when paddling the St. Lawrence River. Be aware of your location at all times, and be aware of the nearest safe egress point, in the case of an emergency. Often these safe spots will be national park islands where shelter and warmth (and often assistance) are easily found. Other times it may be necessary to make an emergency landing on the property of a private landowner. In a case such as this, please respect the rights of the property owner.

### MAPS AND CHARTS

The 10 thematic maps in this guidebook are an excellent resource for planning and research, but do not contain sufficient detail for river travel. Please do not rely solely on these maps. The NTS Topographic Map, CHS Hydrographic Chart and Waterproof Chart references are provided for each route. Carry a topo map or chart and consult it frequently. Maps and charts can be purchased on-line, ordered by telephone and obtained from marinas, outfitters and other local suppliers.

### ACCESS POINTS **A**

The best launch and egress points for each route are identified for paddlers to access the river from the Canadian mainland. In most cases, these are public facilities such as boat launches, parks and marinas. Look for roadside signs indicating boat launching ramps.



### THOUSAND ISLAND COMMUNITIES:

The cities, towns and villages of the Thousand Islands are part of the region's allure. Take time ashore to visit these friendly and historic communities. They offer dining and B&B, inn and hotel accommodation as an alternative to camping. In Kingston look for tourist information in Confederation Park, (across from City Hall). In Gananoque, information can be found in the waterfront Historic Village, at the municipal marina, and on King Street beside the bridge over the Gananoque river. In the Ivy Lea area, a welcome centre is located on the 1000 Islands Parkway, directly across from the Ivy Lea Campground. In Brockville, visitor information is available at Blockhouse Island, a short walk or paddle east of the paddling access points.

City of Brockville Tourism

1-888-251-7676

[www.brockville.com](http://www.brockville.com)

Gananoque Chamber of Commerce

1-800-561-1595

[www.1000islands.on.ca/gan](http://www.1000islands.on.ca/gan)

Kingston Tourism Information Office

1-888-855-4555

[www.kingstoncanada.com](http://www.kingstoncanada.com)

Ontario East Travel

1-800-567-3278

[www.ontarioeast.com](http://www.ontarioeast.com)

Thousand Islands International

Tourism Council

1-800-847-5263

[www.visit1000islands.com](http://www.visit1000islands.com)

## STAYING IN 1000 ISLANDS COMMUNITIES

After a day on the water exploring the islands, consider spending your evening exploring one of the beautiful communities on the mainland with a stay in one of the fine accommodations of the region. Historic B&B's, inns and hotels offer a full range of services for paddlers. Many are on the water and others a few steps away. Staying on the mainland reduces the impact of visitors on the islands and can be a lot more comfortable in the spring and fall. Information is available from the tourism information centres listed on the preceding page and an accommodation listing may be printed directly from this web site by following the link to [www.paddle1000.com/info/listings1.htm](http://www.paddle1000.com/info/listings1.htm)



## NEED EQUIPMENT, LESSONS OR A GUIDE FOR YOUR TRIP?

A directory of outfitters is included in the body of the web site so that it can be readily updated and easily printed. You can follow this link to [www.paddle1000.com/paddling/outfitters.htm](http://www.paddle1000.com/paddling/outfitters.htm)

Most of the access points identified are appropriate for both day-tripping and extended trips. However, a few are only suitable for day-tripping, as no overnight parking is available. In some cases inns, motels, B&B's, marinas and canoe clubs may provide suitable access points for members and guests. Be sure to confirm this with service providers, upon making your reservations. A listing of marinas, launch ramps and services for paddlers may be printed directly from the web site. [www.paddle1000.com/info/listings3.htm](http://www.paddle1000.com/info/listings3.htm)

## TRIP LENGTH & DISTANCES

Distances for routes are provided in kilometers, trip length is described in terms of half day, full day or extended trip. Be mindful that these are estimates based on paddling the routes in many conditions, solo and with groups; be sure to have a contingency plan for unexpected events or inclement weather.

## EXTENSION

Each route abuts at least one other route, and possible extensions are noted where routes may be combined for extended trips. Generally the river is most easily paddled from west to east (Kingston-Brockville), taking advantage of the prevailing winds and water current. However, all routes can be paddled in any direction. Safe, sheltered paddling can usually be found by taking advantage of the leeward side of islands.

## HAZARDS !

In addition to the general safety considerations outlined in this introduction, the specific hazards that may be encountered such as busy channel crossings, cable ferry routes, and sites where strong winds frequent or fast-moving currents lie are clearly marked and described for each route.

## POINTS OF INTEREST ◉

The points of interest noted in the route descriptions are special areas of the Thousand Islands that are reminders of the region's rich natural diversity and cultural heritage. These include quiet trails and sandy beaches, secluded bays, hidden channels, unique geological formations, mysterious petroglyphs, historic architecture, submerged wrecks, and abandoned homesteads. Points of interest are special places, often hidden and easily overlooked by those unfamiliar with the islands. They are noted here to enrich your paddling experience!

## SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

For safe paddling in the Thousand Islands, it is necessary to be mindful of several considerations.

**Paddle with friends.** Only very experienced paddlers (with a failsafe roll, strong knowledge of several self-rescue techniques, and trustworthy navigation skills) should paddle alone in the Thousand Islands. Group paddling is strongly recommended, to create a safer paddling scenario where partners can assist in navigation, capsize events or first aid situations.

**Watch for other vessels.** The St. Lawrence River is a busy place full of recreational motor craft, sailboats, and commercial touring boats, not to mention ocean going vessels. The recreational channel is marked by red and green buoys on the water, and is clearly indicated on the route maps that highlight the Thousand Islands Water Trail. Boat traffic is especially busy near the marinas and harbours of Kingston, Gananoque, Ivy Lea, Rockport and Brockville. The St. Lawrence International Seaway Channel is definite consideration in trip planning. Plan to steer clear of it! At Ironsides Island, westbound the shipping channel splits into two channels diverting most of the traffic south in the American Shipping Channel of the river. Eastbound from Ironsides, all traffic uses a route that lies mainly in Canadian waters and is especially hazardous in the narrow waters off Brockville.

**Watch for rocks.** The hundreds of submerged shoals in the river shouldn't provide too much difficulty for paddlers. In fact these areas are often clear of all other type of vessel and can usually be navigated by paddle. However, be wary of shoals when high winds gather large waves that can break in an erratic manner on shoals.

**Beware strong currents.** In places where the river channel narrows, the river current can be swift. Areas of strong currents are identified clearly on route maps. Paddlers should avoid paddling directly through these areas, and should rather stay nearshore to minimize the risk of a capsize.

**Respect stormy weather.** Storms brew very quickly over the St. Lawrence. If it looks like weather approaching, it will very likely arrive before you expect it. Have a map case on deck, and be aware of your location on the water at all times so that you can quickly determine the best location to land and the fastest route to it. Emergency landings ashore or on the islands should be made on public lands, but in cases of grave danger do what is necessary to be safe. Landowners of the region

## FLOAT PLAN

A float plan is a record, prepared in trip planning, that provides a complete set of information (intended to be shared with all paddlers on trip) that is invaluable to search and rescue personnel in the case of an emergency.

It is essential that paddlers prepare a float plan for tripping in the Thousand Islands region. A copy of this document should be carried by all members of the group on trip, and left with at least one trusted individual. It will detail the journey precisely as it is planned, including the estimated departure and arrival dates, times and locations. The float plan should also contain information on the group (size, number of craft, craft descriptions) and a description of each member of the group (identity, paddling skill level, allergies or conditions and first aid abilities). Contact information for the next of kin of all group members should also be contained in the document, as well as the contact information of the responsible individual on shore.

## **DRINKING WATER SAFETY**

Utilize a water purification system to ensure your drinking water supply is safe for consumption, free of bacteria and viruses. Water purifiers are fast, efficient tools for adventure travel that reduce the need to build or maintain a campfire, thus reducing the petrol fuel or fuelwood draw. If your party is not equipped with a purifying device, water may be boiled for ten minutes to reasonably purify the supply.

## **FISH CONSUMPTION GUIDELINES**

Fishing seasons are strictly defined for all fish species of the St. Lawrence. Anglers require a fishing licence (available in all villages along the river at various businesses). Anglers who intend to consume fish from the river should consult the annual Sport Fishing Guide for Ontario waters. It outlines season, catch limit, and consumption guidelines. Complete information on fishing in Ontario can be found at Let's Fish Ontario [www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/fishing/](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/fishing/)

will often be quick to come to your assistance.

**Stay warm.** Cold and wet is a dangerous combination in any wilderness situation. Be sure to be cold weather ready when paddling the river during all seasons. Water temperatures are cold in all months except June-August, and air temperatures can be cool on summer evenings.

**Stay in touch.** When paddling the Thousand Islands, be sure to carry appropriate communication equipment. A VHF radio is the standard communication device for boaters, but may prove too bulky for paddlers. A cell phone is far more convenient, and is effective for the region has good cellular phone coverage.

**Be seen.** Be visible when you are on the water so that fellow boaters can see you. Use common sense to improve the chances of being quickly seen on the water—wear colourful clothing, use navigation lights in conditions of poor visibility, or paddle as a group. For signaling an emergency, carry a waterproof high-beam flashlight, or better yet at least 3 flares (smoke or fire)

**Be heard.** Three short whistle blasts will signal to others in the immediate vicinity your distress. VHF radio channel 16 is used for EMERGENCY and CALLING purposes only. In case of grave and imminent danger, use channel 16 and repeat MAYDAY three times. When you require assistance but face no immediate danger, use channel 16 and repeat PAN PAN three times. With a cellular phone, dial \*16 for the Canadian Coast Guard Rescue Coordination Centre. Give a vessel description, position, nature of problem, and type of assistance required. Contact Marine Search and Rescue (1-800-267-5111) in an emergency situation when a fellow paddler or other boater is missing and presumed overboard.

**Be safe.** The Safe Boating Guide is published by the Canadian Coast Guard. It encourages boaters to manage their own safety by avoiding unnecessary risks and planning each trip with safety in mind. The Guide stresses 5 easy rules, all relevant for paddlers: Buckle Up (your PAD); Drive (Paddle) Sober; Look First; Wear the Gear; Get Trained. Recreational users should consult this publication. It is available free of charge at 1-800-267-6687 [www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca](http://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca)

## PADDLING CONSIDERATIONS

The St. Lawrence river is used by all types of watercraft, from canoe and kayak to pleasure cruiser to ocean freighter. Several rules guide river travel. Primary is the “paddle-sail-power” right of way hierarchy that gives priority to self-propelled craft, then sail-powered, and finally motorized craft. While this rule is in the paddler’s favour, it is often forgotten. Be cautious when approaching other craft. **Note that this rule does not apply to freighters! Most tonnage rules. Steer clear of these vessels, and exercise extreme caution!**

**Stay close to shore.** To minimize the hazards associated with other watercraft, stay close to shore and away from the recreational boating and shipping channels.

**Cross cautiously and quickly.** When the need arises to cross a recreational or shipping channel, do so with caution by checking in all directions for approaching vessels. If the crossing is clear, gather the group to cross the channel in a pod so as to minimize the time necessary for the first and last paddler in the group to make the crossing, keeping a brisk paddling pace.

**Stay to starboard.** If you alter your route in response to an approaching vessel, steer to your right. This is a standard convention that you should assume other vessels will assume in their approach. If both vessels steer to starboard, hazardous collisions will be reduced!

**Assist in distress.** If you happen to be in the vicinity of another in distress, be quick to respond. Ensure that the scene is safe for you to assist. Use your communication equipment to contact the professional response facilities onshore.

**Be mindful of other people you encounter on the water.** The majority of islands in the river are private property, and while many islands owners are happy to say hello and may even welcome you ashore for a friendly chat, please respect their privacy. Also, remember to respect the privacy of other boaters who may be anchored for the evening in a sheltered bay. Give a wide berth as you paddle the channels.



## “LEAVE ONLY PADDLE STROKES”

No trace recreation involves identifying the traces you may leave behind and eliminating them through creative solutions. Excellent information is available from “Leave No Trace” [www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org)

One of the simple pleasures of paddling is the chance to land your vessel and stretch your legs but keep the potential impact in mind when launching or landing your kayak. Paddlers are encouraged to use the “dock-rock-sand” method for selecting a landing site. Docks are located on most of the islands highlighted in the route descriptions. When space is available, dock landings provide sheltered, predictable egress points where landing poses no impact to island shorelines. (The yellow line access on national park island docks is reserved for park and emergency vessels. It is often available for paddlers to quickly disembark before carrying craft and gear to a nearby campsite. Carry your vessel to the campsite or tether to visitor dock space for the evening (fee applies for the latter). Please do not drag boats on the fragile shorelines.

If there is no dock, please be mindful of your impact when landing on shorelines. Rock (cobble or bedrock) beaches are common throughout the region and offer landing sites that are more resilient than sand beaches. Pay close attention to beach flora if you land on sand beaches. Some of the rarest species that inhabit the region grow in beach habitats, and may easily be trampled. Please ensure that you select an appropriate landing site that is free of vegetation. Finally, enjoy exploring the wetlands of the river from your vessel, but do not land in marsh shoreline habitats, as these areas are extremely fragile.

## CAMPING

Public and private camping facilities serve paddlers in the Thousand Islands. A listing may be downloaded directly from this web site by following the link below. The paddling routes rely primarily on public campsites on the islands of St. Lawrence Islands National Park, the Parks of the St. Lawrence campground at Ivy Lea, and the municipal park islands that lie off Brockville. Please contact these organizations directly to obtain the most current information regarding services, facilities, fees and regulations.



St. Lawrence Islands National Park  
(613) 923-5261  
[http://parkscanada.pch.gc.ca/parks/ontario/st\\_lawrence\\_islands/st\\_lawrence\\_islands\\_e.htm](http://parkscanada.pch.gc.ca/parks/ontario/st_lawrence_islands/st_lawrence_islands_e.htm)



Parks of the St. Lawrence  
(800) 437-2233  
[www.parks.on.ca/campout/index.htm](http://www.parks.on.ca/campout/index.htm)



City of Brockville  
(613) 342-8772  
[www.brockville.com](http://www.brockville.com)

Listing of private and public campgrounds in the 1000 Islands  
[www.paddle1000.com/info/listings2.htm](http://www.paddle1000.com/info/listings2.htm)

## ISLAND CAMPING

When on land, please abide the simple tenet “**stay on trail.**” Island ecosystems are fragile and innocent wandering can lead to trampling of rare flora and may be unsafe (poison ivy grows on many islands and tree branches may be snagged overhead). The trails outlined in the route descriptions are located on islands managed by St. Lawrence Islands National Park. The national park designs and maintains its trails to minimize environmental impact and ensure safety for hikers. For the same reasons, **please camp only in designated places.**



“**Pack in, pack out**” refers to all solid wastes that cannot be burned. This rule is especially important for paddlers to abide by when visiting island and sites. Minimize your garbage waste by reducing the number of cans, bottles and plastic/foil wrapping you use in purchasing and packing the food for your trip. All national park island campsites have privy facilities. When you have been given permission to camp on private property or find yourself somewhere where there is no privy, **human waste** may be deposited in catholes dug 10-15cm deep and at least 75m from water. Pack out toilet paper and sanitary products and cover and disguise hole. Better yet, carry out your waste out too. There are lightweight portable systems available to make this easier.

**Open fires are not permitted** on national park islands. Campers are encouraged to **use gas stoves for cooking.** Fires must be contained within designated fire rings and stands on campsites or in the woodstoves located in shelters. Please burn wood provided at the site or purchased from island attendants; refrain from gathering fallen wood as this causes undue stress on the forest ecosystem. The health of these natural systems relies on natural processes like decay and soil replenishment to continue unimpeded. The fallen branches, trees and leaves also provide important habitat for the rich diversity of wildlife of the islands.

**Do not use the river for washing dishes.** Use your three largest containers and wash dishes at least 75m from water. Practice the three wash system; wash using phosphate free biodegradable soap, rinse and dip (in bleach solution) all dishes. Strain wash basin of all small food particles and pack these out along with any packaging and large food scraps. Combine all liquids and scatter over the ground (preferably somewhere with at least 5cm soil cover).



## CULTURAL HERITAGE

The heritage of the Thousand Islands is alive in the legendary tales that speak of struggles of settlement, courage of loyalty to the Crown, establishment of towns and cities, golden days of river guiding, construction of island castles and even disregard for unreasonable laws!

You will undoubtedly begin to discover this unique way of life, shaped by rock and water, as you travel the region and meet the friendly locals and summer people who share their stories freely.

Local museums and historic sites abound. From Old Fort Henry and the Martello Towers of Kingston to the Rideau Canal, to Fort Wellington in Prescott, the legacy of the British defence system of this strategic area of Upper Canada remain active today. View the historic gunboat at Mallorytown Landing to gain a sense of the 19th century naval fleet that cruised the river and Great Lakes to protect from southern invaders. Visit Darlingside at the Raft Narrows, Upper Canada Village in Morrisburg, or the MacLachlin Woodworking Museum at Grass Creek to better imagine what early settlement life entailed.

Wander the streets of any of the waterside cities, towns and villages and marvel at the stately homes, and fine buildings of these historic communities.

Share the wonder and love of the islands with the artists and artisans of the region at studios, galleries and fine gift shops along the river corridor. Be sure to visit the historic waterfront village at Gananoque, particularly the Arthur Childs Heritage Centre and VAGA Gallery, to view the creations of the finest local artists. If you happen to be in the Islands when one of the many festivals and events is on be sure and make time in your itinerary to participate.

## NATURAL HISTORY

The Thousand Islands is the scene of remarkable transformation. The islands, islets and shoals that comprise the Thousand Islands, stand stubbornly today following ages of geological history that has seen the region changed from a sea floor to a mountain range. Indeed, the islands are the remnant peaks of an ancient mountain chain, first scoured and shaped by successive glacial advances and then inundated by the floodwaters of the Great Lakes.

The complex geology of the region includes a remarkable diversity of formations and landforms. Within the granite-dominated landscape distinct rock formations lie scattered: folded gneiss dots Mulcaster Island; Gordon Island is underlain by sandstone, visible in shoreline bluffs; limestone beaches surround Cedar Island. Throughout the region, unique landforms add diversity to the topography: Grenadier and Hill Islands are large, narrow eskers; the whaleback shape of Mermaid Island was formed by glacial polishing and scour; potholes were literally dug out of the rock on Bostwick Island; the polished northeast facing slopes and jagged western facing cliffs clearly show the direction of glacial movement.

The Frontenac Axis is a narrow granite spur of the Canadian Shield that bisects the region and provides the rugged character for which the Thousand Islands are renowned. The continental landform is ecologically significant due to connectivity it provides, linking the northern forest of the Algonquin highlands with the rugged Adirondack Mountains. Although the waters of the Great Lakes can be a barrier to migrating flora and fauna, the St. Lawrence River funnels the water into a narrow channel here, and the islands form stepping stones shortening distances across the river. Thus, the Axis provides a corridor for wildlife movement that maintains the integrity of the region and the wild regions to the north and south. The Frontenac Axis stands wild today because its rugged topography of rock and wetlands made much of the region poor farmland for early settlers and held only scattered pockets of large forests for timber barons. The region remains wild thanks to caring stewardship initiatives undertaken by the active conservation community that includes federal, provincial and



## STEWARDSHIP

The natural and cultural heritage of the Thousand Islands is highly valued by residents and visitors alike. Protection to ensure that the heritage of the region is not threatened is afforded to several special places. Public land stewardship is undertaken by St. Lawrence Islands National Park and the Parks of the St. Lawrence. These parks balance natural heritage protection with recreational use and enjoyment. Sensible rules and guidelines are established to ensure that the natural environment and high-quality recreation opportunities are preserved. Be sure to familiarize yourself with this information before tripping in the region.

Private land stewardship is undertaken by caring individuals in the region, supported by the Thousand Islands Heritage Conservancy, Leeds County Stewardship Council, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, among many other organizations.

As a visitor to the Thousand Islands you can contribute to the stewardship effort by striving to attain the highest standard of low-impact practice, learning more about the ecology of the region, or supporting one of the conservation organizations that work to ensure this tiny jewel of the St. Lawrence remains. Links to many of these conservation organizations are provided in the body of the web site at [www.paddle1000.com/islands/links.htm](http://www.paddle1000.com/islands/links.htm)

municipal agencies working in concert with local partners such as land trusts and landowners associations.

The Thousand Islands is a remarkably biodiverse region that hosts a rich and complex ecology characterized by thick woods, rocky outcrops and river marshes. Mature mixed forests of hemlock, white pine, pitch pine, red and white oak, maple and birch fill the forests with vibrant life. The region is a "tension zone" of rapid transition between northern and southern forest that supports plants and animals from several different geographic regions. The Thousand Islands ecology is strongly affected by several inter-related factors that combine to create a richly diverse ecoregion. As the confluence of east-west and north-south wildlife movement corridors, species characteristic of several forest zones inhabit the Thousand Islands. Some forest communities are favoured, while others are hindered, by the acidic soils of the granitic bedrock that contrast sharply with the alkaline soils associated with neighbouring lowlands. The dominant east-west orientation of the islands creates a distinct north aspect and south aspect on larger islands. This creates unique microclimates, or slight differences in temperature and moisture, which provide subtle habitat variations for wildlife to carve a niche. Finally, the presence of Lake Ontario immediately adjacent to the region has the effect of a 'heat sink'; it moderates the local climate of the Thousand Islands. Notable examples of species which are common in the region, but rare in the rest of Canada include: Rue Anemone; the Black Rat Snake (Canada's largest reptile); Pitch Pine (a southern species whose range extends along the Frontenac Arch to just north of the 1000 Islands); the Least Bittern (a wading bird whose wetland habitats are decreasing elsewhere within its northern range); and a small population of deerberry that remains on some islands in the area.



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Many others attended meetings and provided photographs, information and advice. We appreciate all the help and encouragement we received and hope that through this collective effort many more people will come to experience the joys of paddling in the Thousand Islands.

Thanks

John, Leif, Jim & Russell

## THE THOUSAND ISLANDS WATER TRAIL PROJECT TEAM

**Leif Helmer**, author of the guidebook, was born in Kingston, raised in the country near Merrickville, and schooled at Queen's University. On the team at St. Lawrence Islands National Park for several years, Leif Helmer is a life-long resident and member of the greater 1000 Islands community. An ardent paddler, and committed environmentalist, Leif enjoys splitting his leisure time between lacing up his hiking boots and squeezing into the cockpit of his sea kayak. He is presently living on Nova Scotia's beautiful and wild south shore, where paddling and hiking routes abound, but a little bit of the St. Lawrence river still runs in his veins! He can be reached at [leif\\_helmer@hotmail.com](mailto:leif_helmer@hotmail.com)



**Russell Turner** designed the web site and manages it on an ongoing basis. He can be reached at the MIRUSCO [rturner@mirusco.com](mailto:rturner@mirusco.com) Ph: (705) 876-9935

Cartographer, **Jim Todd**, produced the spectacular maps for this project. You can contact him via [todd@tartannet.ns.ca](mailto:todd@tartannet.ns.ca) Ph: (902) 532-5009

Project Manager, **John Good**, specializes in interpretation, marketing, community relations, fund raising and partnership development for heritage organizations. He can be reached at [john.good1@sympatico.ca](mailto:john.good1@sympatico.ca) Ph: (705) 652-8778

## DISCLAIMER

The Thousand Islands Water Trail, Thousand Islands Community Development Corporation, and Thousand Islands St. Lawrence River Marketing Partnership and other individuals, organizations and agencies associated with the project assume no liability for accident or injury that may occur. While every attempt has been made to fully describe the general safety considerations for paddling the St. Lawrence and the specific hazards that may be encountered, this guide is not an exhaustive account of Thousand Islands paddling. There are risks associated with paddling; weather and water conditions can change without warning, and other vessels on the river can pose serious hazards to paddlers. The responsibility for safety lies solely with the user of this guidebook.