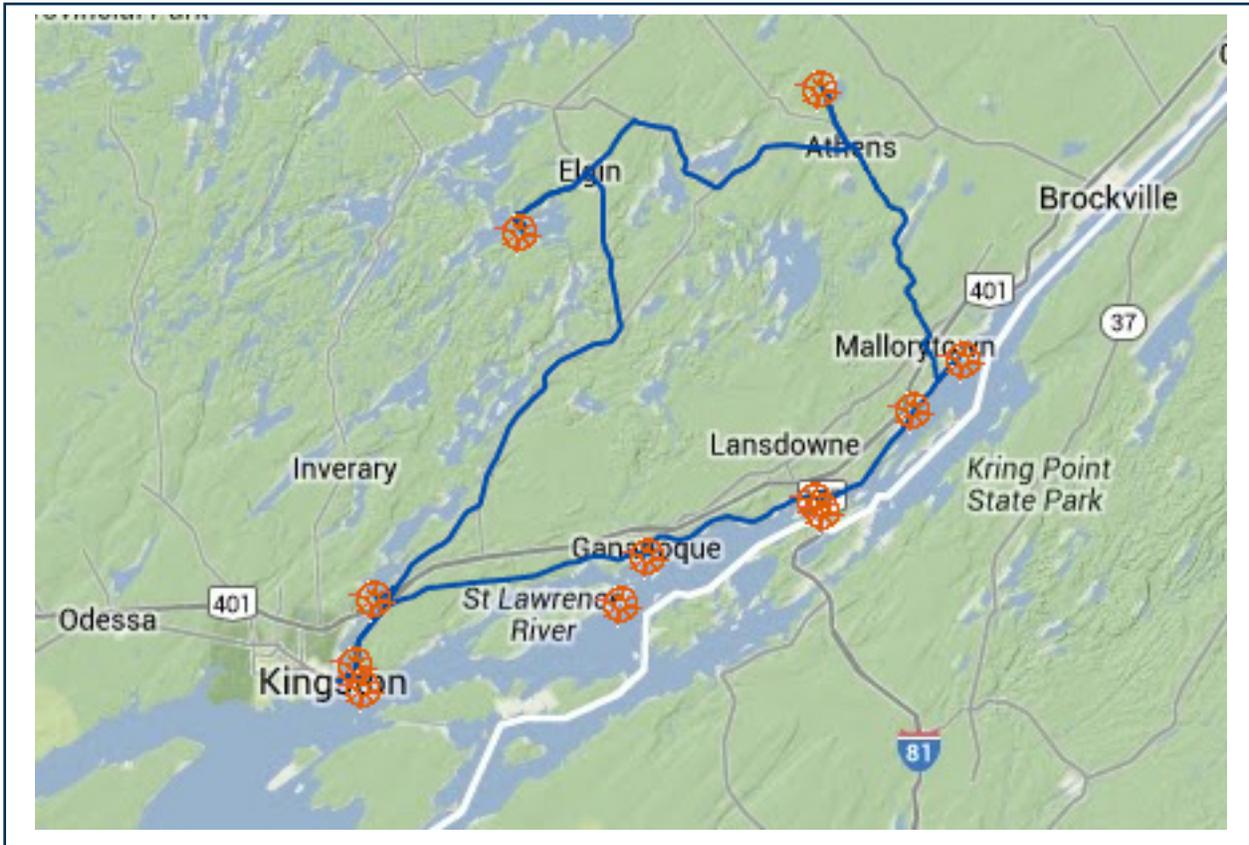




FAB EXPERIENCES

Eastern Ontario, Canada

Myths & Legends



Tour Description

A region so diverse in landscape and rich in history is bound to have intrigue—myths and legends that are part of our unique heritage. While there are dozens of stories to tell (see many more at frontenacarchbiosphere.ca/explore/fab-heritage) this tour takes you to places where several came to be, and live on. ...be sure to be home before dark!

1. Ghost of Barriefield

Lat: 44.243200
Long: -76.462800

Notes:

In a meadow near St. Mark's Church in Barriefield, an old community near Fort Henry, stood a beautiful tree called Marks' Tree (named for a landowner coincidentally named Marks). Hundreds of local people including the minister saw a 'tree-dwelling spirit' in Marks' Tree. It was said to be a sometimes funny, sometimes malicious ghost that threatened anyone who came near the tree. It was apparently guarding the tree or property until its namesake, Colonel Marks returned. One night the spirit went from the tree to the church belfry, ringing the bell, and back to the tree several times. The people thought it might be someone tricking them so they kept watch all night. There was no one but the bell rang. When Colonel Marks returned, the ghost vanished - never to return.

Driving directions: From Green Woods Inn, drive south on Hwy. 15 for approx. 4.5km, to Wellington St.; turn right. In 350m, turn right at intersection with Main St.; St. Mark's Church is at the end of that street. Take time to explore the historic homes (all private) of Barriefield, once a village of trades people and some officers for Fort Henry.

2. Ghost of Cedar Island

Lat: 44.225400
Long: -76.454170

Notes:

In the 1840s, Robert James worked on a fortification on Cedar Island, the Cathcart Redoubt. He and other island workers lived at the site six days a week but had shore leave in Kingston, Saturday eve to Monday morning. James had met and fell in love with a woman named Elizabeth in Kingston, daughter of the tavern owner where he stayed in town. Tragically, James died coming to see her one rough weekend eve when the work boat overturned in rough waters, and all 12 workman drowned. Elizabeth refused to believe he was gone and spent the rest of her days watching for him from the promontory at Fort Henry. She passed away one cold day on the Fort Henry promontory. After the Cathcart Redoubt was completed on Cedar Island, soldiers stationed there talked of a beautiful lady, who appeared and disappeared mysteriously. Picnickers and boaters for decades since have also reported seeing Elizabeth—the Ghost of Cedar Island. Is she still visiting the island waiting for Robert to return?

Driving directions: From Barriefield, take Highway 15 south to Highway 2; turn right. After 700m, turn left onto Constantine Drive, which turns into Fort Henry Drive. Follow Fort Henry Drive to the waterfront to look out to Cedar Island.

Explore more at: frontenacarchbiosphere.ca

3. Sea Serpent

Lat: 44.225400
Long: -76.454170

Driving Directions: Travel east along Highway 2 towards Gananoque.

Notes:

Monster eels, giant snakes, dragons and huge fish—every kind of scary sea creature has been spotted in the waters of eastern Lake Ontario. Algonquin and Iroquois people told of a giant race of serpents or dragons in Lake Ontario. French explorers such as Pierre Radisson noted the presence of giant snake-like creatures in his diary. In 1835 the crew of the Polyphemus reported seeing an eighty-foot snake in the waters off Kingston. In September 1881 a twenty-foot creature was spotted in the Rideau Canal by the crew and passengers of the steamer Gypsy. The one-eyed “Kingstie” seen numerous times by Indians, early explorers and pioneers, basking off Snake and Wolfe Islands, was last seen in 1935. A hoax, or the real thing? No one has the explanation. But, in 1934 near Kingston, a quiet, calm evening on Cartwright Bay was shattered by screams of terrified bathers. A strange creature rose from the depths and was spotted on and off for several weeks. Finally a group of adventurers went to do battle in a small boat. The creature reared its ugly head and one man with a rifle tried to shoot it but he forgot to bring ammunition. So the group rammed the creature with their boat and declared it to be dead...but it appeared again for most of that summer. Thirty years later, three men who were students in Kingston at the time confessed that they had made the monster with barrels filled with sealed empty bottles, anchored to the lake bottom. They raised and lowered the head with a smaller rope. At least one mystery sighting was solved.

4. Old Moss Back

Lat: 44.288600
Long: -76.187500

Notes:

Jake Brennan was a famous fishing guide in Gananoque. He caught many big muskies, some of which you can see on the walls of the Gananoque Inn. “The one that got away” was a fish Brennan named “Old Moss Back”. He had him on the line, fighting for hours, but the battle was lost - except for a scale caught on a barb of the lure. The rings of the scale suggested a monstrous-sized and ancient fish—but no one has ever caught it again. Is Old Moss Back is waiting out in the St Lawrence for the next fisherman who thinks he’s able to reel in the big one? *View the St. Lawrence from any number of locations in and around Gananoque. (See the St. Lawrence from the ferry landing at the south end of the Howe Island Ferry Road).*

5. Elizabeth Barnett

Lat: 44.323800
Long: -76.161300

Notes:

Elizabeth Barnett was born on the US shores of the Thousand Islands, but had moved to live in Gananoque. In February, 1838, during the height of the unrest in the Patriot War, Barnett was visiting friends in Clayton when she overheard plans to attack Gananoque. By night, she bravely crossed 15 km. of the frozen St. Lawrence River to warn the town. Women and children fled the town, the militia was called out of Kingston, and men prepared for the onslaught with liquor and guns. Men on horses scouted out the Americans’ progress. A storm had blown in, and it was bitter cold. The scouts got to Hickey Island, close to Grindstone and found that the Americans were abandoning their plans due to the storm and poor ice, and news that Gananoque was prepared. Elizabeth Barnett was indeed a heroine who was brave enough to cross the risky ice in the winter when others would not or could not, but little known to history.

Driving Directions: Take Hwy 2/King St. into Gananoque, turn right on Market St. to Gananoque waterfront.

Explore more at: frontenacarchbiosphere.ca

6. Smugglers

Lat: 44.365950
Long: -75.986560

Notes:

Smuggling has taken place in the 1000 Islands ever since the border was drawn. Even in the War of 1812, entrepreneurial smugglers took horses south and beef north across the river, even having a well-trodden route across Hill Island. In the Prohibition years of the 1930s, fast runabouts with names like Miss Behave stowed bottles of contraband liquor in secret compartments. And as popularized in movies for years afterwards, they roared through the night to hidden US mainland destinations. However, the greatest amount of smuggling was far quieter and secretive. At out of view places like Smuggler's Cove, skiffs and rowboats were loaded with hooch-filled sacks, and just like any fisherman might do, rowed out and through the islands, but to preplanned rendezvous. These same boats can be seen as pleasure craft on the river today and at the Clayton Antique Boat Museum in NY. Smuggling continues to the present and everyone in the area has her own tales. The islands provide intricate, secret channels, as you can see from this viewpoint.

At Ivy Lea Park, Thousand Islands Parkway. There is a vehicle fee for Ivy Lea Park, but no fee to walk in. In season, you could pay the fee, or park across the road at the Frontenac Arch Biosphere office, and walk over. Follow the lane ways, keeping right/west to come to viewpoints from docks.

Driving directions: From King St. in Gananoque, follow the Thousand Islands Parkway approx. 13.3 km. to Ivy Lea Park (649 Thousand Islands Pkwy)

7. The Lost Channel

Lat: 44.358200
Long: -75.979620

Notes:

See the Lost Channel from the Thousand Islands Bridge to Hill Island, parking on the Hill Island end, to walk back up for an overview of the islands. Imagine that there is no bridge, cottages or other landmarks as your eyes explore the islands and channels. In 1760, during the Seven Year War between England and France, the English had taken control of most of the inland territory except from Fort De Levis on an island near present day Prescott and downstream to Quebec. The English planned a three pronged attack from the Quebec, Lake Champlain and Oswego. The British force left Oswego with 10,000 men, two war ships, the Onondaga and the Mohawk and a hundreds of bateaux and small boats. As they came into the westerly Thousand Islands, a scouting party of French were spotted, and some of the British boats, including the Onondaga gave chase, lest the French reach and warn the fort downstream. The chase lead into the maze of channels, and as the Onondaga went in and as the sun set, the wind died. It was suddenly discovered the French and allies had set up an ambush in the islands, firing into the drifting Onondaga. The captain lowered a longboat, to reach the Mohawk for help. The Onondaga drifted free, but the bateaux and its crew was never seen again. Boats from the convoy searched the channels, but the confusing maze lead to the name 'The Lost Channel'. Several years later a small sunken craft, with Onondaga painted on the stern.

Driving directions: From Ivy Lea Park, take first exit left on Parkway, to Hwy. 137 South, towards Hill Island. There is a toll to cross the bridge.

Explore more at: frontenacarchbiosphere.ca

8. La Rue Mills - Black Cattle and Gold

Lat: 44.431630
Long: -75.885730

William “Billa” LaRue came to the Thousand Islands following backlash to those loyal to the British crown, in 1784. He settled on the banks of a creek, that now bears his name, which tumbled in a series of falls into the St. Lawrence west of the landing for the village of Mallorytown. La Rue built a grist mill and saw mill to harness the water power of the falls. During the War of 1812, the flour production went to the military for a time, and it was considered necessary to protect the site. Rifle pits were manned where La Rue Creek frothed into the river. Billa LaRue’s mills made him a considerable income over the years. Apparently he kept his savings in the form of gold, but hid it away even from his family. When on his deathbed, LaRue’s wife pleaded with him to reveal where the money was, but he would not. Instead he gazed out the window, across the grounds to where his children were buried, and proclaimed that was where his treasure lay. People couldn’t decide whether the treasure was buried on those grounds in a literal or figurative sense, but took up their shovels in efforts to find out. A lot of earth was turned, but nothing was ever found. One evening, however, a group of locals were determined to get to the bottom of the matter. “We had provided ourselves with a witch-hazel diving rod, a goodly supply of shovels and picks... And as the night was charming, we proceeded to the vicinity of the house, where Billa had resided, determined, if possible, to probe the secret to the bottom”. The witch-hazel did its job and they dug, finding a large metallic object. Then, “in an instant we were surrounded by innumerable creatures, trampling up to the very edge of the circle. We could but distinctly distinguish the forms of the new comers, but to my mind they appeared to be black cattle, and judging from the trampling, their number must have been thousands. We hesitated—a great fear came upon us, which I cannot describe—and, with a single impulse, we dropped the crow-bar, and ran for dear life”. Upon returning by day, “We found no sign of the flat stone or metallic covering at the bottom of the pit. The treasure had been moved.”

Driving directions: From Hill Island, cross back to mainland, take first exit right past toll booth (no toll on return); take Thousand Islands Parkway east approx. 12 km. to La Rue cemetery and viewpoints, north side of Parkway.

Notes:

Explore more at: frontenacarchbiosphere.ca

9. Chimney Island

Lat: 44.468772
Long: -75.834401

Driving directions: From La Rue Mills site, travel 5.6 km. east on Thousand Islands Parkway to stop at parking pull-off, right (south) side of Parkway; historic plaque.

Notes:

In 1799, a handsome Frenchman and his beautiful Indian wife—some say a princess of a tribe to the west—moved to an island east of Mallorytown Landing. They offered hospitality to passers-by on the river. Their cabin hosted an unusual wealth of furnishings, remarkable in an otherwise rustic environment. On October 25, 1800, Enoch Malloy and Joseph Buck were hunting along the river and saw the island in a mass of flames. As they came around the south side of the island they found a half burnt canoe on the shore, with the body of the Frenchman, a tomahawk in his skull. There was no sign of his wife. When the island fire died, the only thing left was the blackened chimney. Thomas Sherwood, magistrate of Brockville and Major-General Hunter, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, investigated but found no answers. During the War of 1812-1814 the island was a site for a British Blockhouse, because it was ideally situated in a shoal-strewn section of the river that controlled the confined channels. A causeway led to the island and blockhouse. A garrison of soldiers was stationed at the blockhouse chose to camp on the mainland, on the hill north of the present day Thousand Islands Parkway: the blockhouse had a terribly poor chimney, and smoke filled the building. But nonetheless, the notorious chimney stood for many decades after the blockhouse was gone. The island's third and present chimney was build from rubble of the other two by a Chicago steel magnate, several decades ago, as a memento of chimneys that had always seemed a part of the island's identity.

10. Witch of Plum Hollow

Lat: 44.668900
Long: -75.981160

Notes:

From a few tea leaves, Elizabeth Barnes (1794-1891) was able to read the past, reveal the present and forecast the future. She was born in County Cork Ireland in 1794 and came to the USA with her husband Robert Harrison who died shortly after. She married David Barnes a wandering cobbler and settled in Plumb Hollow, north of Athens, west of Frankville. Elizabeth lived there until she died in 1891. Many people from all over came to consult Elizabeth. She helped so many people that she became affectionately known as 'Mother Barnes'. She located a drowned man in a lake and knew foul play was involved. When a land owner consulted her about selling his property, she predicted real estate gains if he held it and years later it became a profitable gravel pit. She was consulted by a bookkeeper from Kingston whose job with a major New York company was on the line because the books would not balance. In a trance she saw knife cuts on page 89 of a ledger that changed figures, and also numbers which had been erased on page 333. With those corrections, the books balanced. She helped the young man keep his job. Her fame spread throughout Canada and the United States. Elizabeth Barnes' modest oneroom house stands along a quiet side-road, near Plum Hollow.

Driving directions: From Chimney Island, go west on Thousand Islands Parkway 2.5 km, to Cnty. Rd. 5, turn right; follow Cnty. Rd. 5 to village of Athens (approx 24km), turn left onto Mill St., then right on Elgin St. Travel north for 2 km.; keep right onto Lake Eloida Rd. for 2 km. to Deir Rd.; turn left. After 1 km, turn left at Mother Barnes Rd.; house is 100m on the left.

**11. Davis Lock:
Lockmasters' Treasure**

Lat: 44.563100
Long: -76.292050

Notes:

At Davis, Chaffey's and Jones Falls Lock Stations, the paymasters in the early 1800s are said to have kept aside for "safe keeping" some of the silver coins that was the pay for the workers. They are said to have buried it near the lock stations, but didn't have time to recover it when they were found out and fled to the U.S. They never were able to return and the whereabouts of the gold remains a mystery.

An earlier tale involves Mr. Davis, who sold the land that became Davis Lock. The British military, which constructed the canal, paid landowners in gold coins. Mr. Davis was carrying his sack of gold, when he suddenly took ill. He hid the money—but died before he could reveal its hiding place. No one has rediscovered it since, and if anyone could find it, surely it would be the lockmasters. There have been lockmasters from the Davis family for the many generations since the Rideau Canal was built. Each Lock on the Rideau Canal is unique and you should visit them all. Be sure to talk to the lockmaster who is a wealth of information.

Driving directions: Continue southwest on Mother Barnes Road (turns into Washburns Rd.) for about 7km. Turn right on Cnty. Rd. 42, drive for approx 15km., turn left on Cnty. Rd. 8; follow Cnty. Rd. 8/Main St. approx 5.9 km. to Elgin at intersection with Hwy. 15. Cross Hwy.15 onto Davis Lock Rd., approx. 3.9 km. to Davis Lock.

**12. The Banshee of
Kingston Mills**

Lat: 44.292700
Long: -76.442680

Notes:

The legend of the Banshee started when the Rideau Canal was being built and Irish people settled near the lock. They brought with them supernatural beliefs and the 'Bean-Sidhe' who mourns over the death of a good or holy person was one of those beliefs. In June 1930, on a hot summer day, visitors to Kingston Mills Lock were alarmed when they heard banshees groaning and sobbing in the marsh. The sounds happen when the sun is high and the marsh is full of water. Many people heard the sounds over the years but no one could find anything that caused them. A possible explanation put forward was that the marsh clay had earlier dried up around the cattail roots and the air burst out when flooded, causing groaning noises.

Driving directions: Take Davis Lock Rd. back to Highway 15, turn right. Stay on Hwy 15 for 44km, turn right onto Kingston Mills Rd. Drive about 2km to Kingston Mills Lockstation.

**Return to Green Woods
Inn**

Driving directions: Return to Highway 15, turn right to continue south. Drive about 3km back to Green Woods Inn. 1368 Highway 15, Kingston.