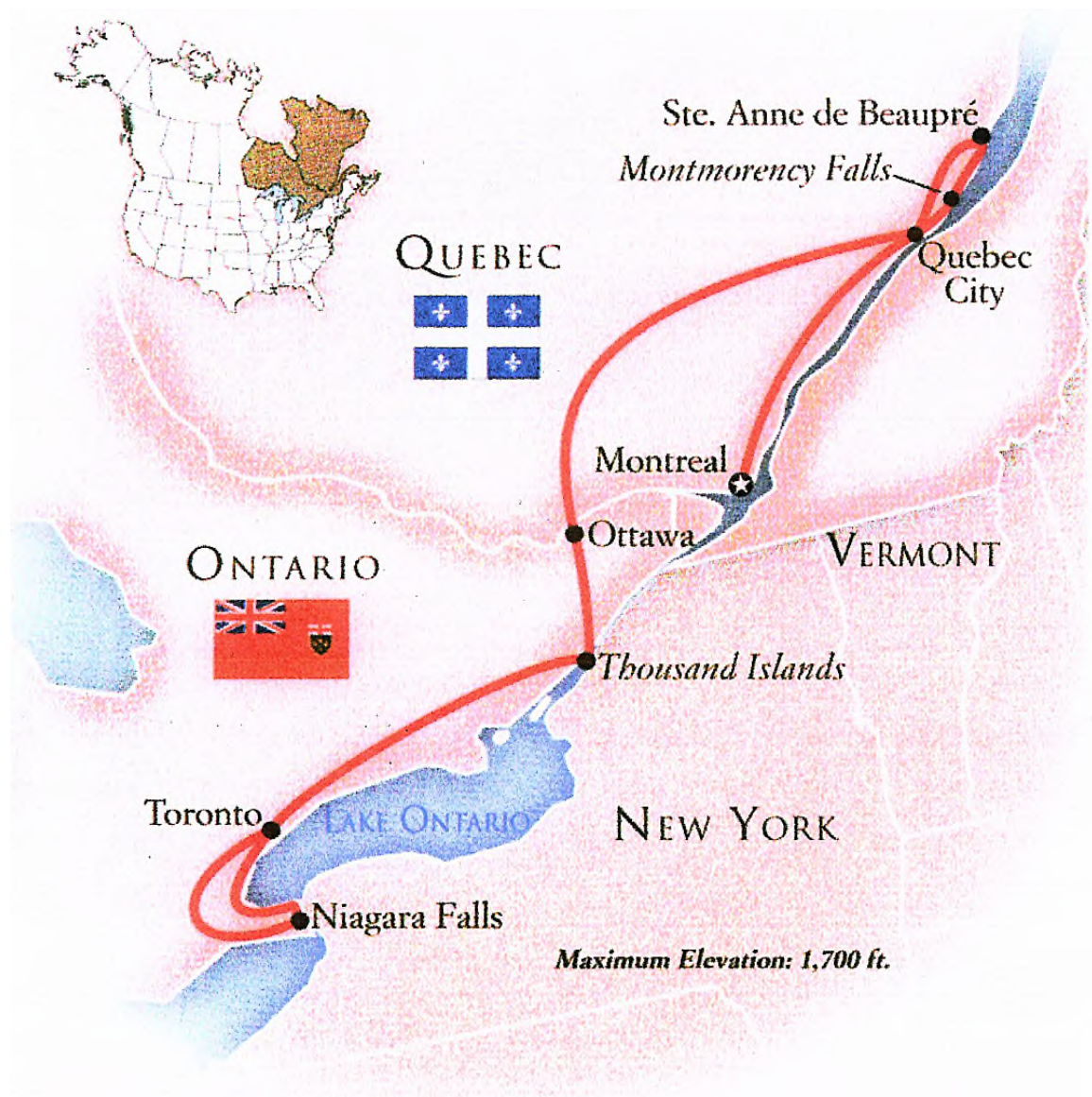


# Canada's Capitals + Niagara Falls

Rasmussen Travels

September 18<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006



### Monday - September 18, 2006 - Montreal, Quebec

We headed to Montreal a day earlier than the tour would begin. We had a one hour flight from Des Moines to Chicago. We changed From "B" to "C" gates to catch our 1 hour and 25 minute flight to Montreal, Quebec, Canada and everything glided along smoothly. We took a taxi to the hotel which was supposed to cost \$35.00 + tip. Doug did not understand the dialect of the Indian taxi driver and gave him \$55.00. The driver repeated "You did understand that the ride was \$35.00?" Doug said yes and that the rest was for him. When we got into the hotel I asked Doug why he gave the guy a \$20.00 tip. He said "I didn't, I gave him a \$5.00 tip." Then I asked Doug how much he thought the taxi ride was and he said "\$50.00"!! I told him "No, the driver repeated the \$35.00 charge the second time but you said you understood him and gave him the \$55.00". We laughed about the fact that they guy went home that night and told his wife he met some "really nice, rich Americans!!".

The hotel was the Fairmont "The Queen Elizabeth" and was right down town. It was built by the Canadian Pacific but Fairmont had bought several Canadian Pacific Hotels. We arrived at 2:00 PM and we went to the room and unpacked four days worth of clothes for our three night stay. We were hungry so I asked the concierge where we could go eat outside and she gave me a map of the city, showed us where McGill Street was (outside of McGill University) and said there were all kinds of cafes on the street. She also pointed out other areas for us to see. We walked the three blocks in the sunshine and loved the outdoor feeling of the area. We picked a place with a "Dutch" name and sat outside. We drank cokes and each had an appetizer for our lunch. Our waitress was cute and very funny. She gave Doug a hard time when he asked what kind of "stuff" they had to eat. She said she would get him a menu and he could choose the "stuff". She continued the friendly bantering throughout the service. As we ate we people watched and immediately noticed more formal dress on the working people [heels, suits on women and suits and ties on men] and the really casual dress on the college students [tie died clothing of all kinds, baggy pants, V-neck sleeveless tops for girls, flip flops and tennis shoes and lots of body piercing and tattoos.]

We walked a four block area and took many different pictures of statues, flowers, building architecture, etc. We found an ATM station inside a bank entry and managed to get some Canadian dollars. (Exchange rate was very close. \$1.00 American equaled \$1.12 in Canadian money.)

We walked back to the hotel and decided to go to the underground shopping mall which had over 1000 shops in it and was laid out for blocks under the outdoor city above it. Even with the map we became confused. We looked in many different stores and Doug decided he needed some high top dress boots to control his ankle and found a men's shoe store. He though he wanted some Ecco's but tried them on and did not like them. He then tried on a pair by a Canadian Company. He liked the fit but thought they were pricey and did not buy them. Sandy was amazed at the different styles in both men and women's clothing. You could see a European flare in very nice fabrics, many with lots of texture. We also took several pictures of the architecture. Sandy regretted not taking pictures of some of the clothing to show their daughters, Keiron and Chontel.

We returned to the hotel to have an early dinner, since our eating had been dictated by the plane flights and we had not really had a regular meal all day. We ate in the hotel



café that we found out later would be the tour café for the stay. The waiter was not terribly friendly, and very busy, but the food was excellent. At the end of the meal, Sandy waved the waiter over and she told him the food was excellent and thanked him. He was so surprised, he smiled. [He told her he thought she was going to complain!] We were to get him

periodically after that and he was always friendly and smiled. We headed for our room, watched TV, read our books and finally went to bed.

### Tuesday - September 19, 2006 - Montreal, Quebec

We ate breakfast in our hotel café and found out the buffet' cost \$25.00 per person. The choices of food were excellent but we were happy we did not have to pay this breakfast price after this day. [Yes, yes we know we paid for it in the package price of the tour but they really do get better deals than we could on our own.]

Doug suggested we go back to the underground shopping center. [I knew those boots were still dancing in his head.] Sure enough we went right back to the shoe store where he tried on both boots and walked around a little and made the decision to purchase them. After his purchase we walked around, found an extremely big "Bombay Shop" and I spent a half hour in there while Doug took pictures of architectural details. We decided to eat lunch in the food court and "people watched". A Canadian lady asked if she could share our table and we said sure. We visited with her, she asked where we were from and what tour we were on and answered questions we asked of her. We found out she was from New Brunswick originally but now living in Montreal because of her job.

After eating, we decided to walk around some more and see different things. We still found the clothing line to be unlike anything we saw in the USA. [French, English, and other European countries seemed to be heavily represented.] We probably walked 10 blocks all together, going and returning and know we did not see it all.

We went back to our room and Doug napped while I read my book. After awhile we both dressed up some for the Welcome Cocktail Hour and Dinner and to meet our new companions for the next 10 days. (Many of the people were quite tired as they had arrived on this day and we were happy once again that we had arrived a day earlier.) Our director, Gerry, explained that we must eat breakfast early as we had to be on the steps of the church next door to the hotel by 8:30 AM as our group picture would be taken then. As dinner was being served, "our" waiter tapped me on the shoulder and said "Hi" and chatted a bit with me. He said waiters trade off duties and he was working our room that night. He made sure my wine glass was full!!!

After dinner, we were not ready to go back to the room, as it was only 9:00 PM, so we joined Ted & Marilyn, Dick & June from NY, Alfred from Germany & Hannelore from Arizona for drink at the Hotel Bar off the lobby. We found out that June and Marilyn were sisters, and that Alfred and Hannelore had just come from Germany for this tour. We had a good time and finally left for our room and bedtime.

### Wednesday - September 20, 2006 - Montreal, Quebec

Everyone was in the café early for breakfast. Our waiter did not wait on us this day but stopped by the table to say "Hi" again. He was soon rushing around and waiting on other people. We all met outside at 8:15 AM and walked to the church across the street [The Cathedral Catherine Du Monde] and began lining up for the group picture. After the picture, we boarded our bus for the tour of Montreal. We were introduced to our French bus driver "Michelle" and were off. As we rode, Gerry explained that Michelle was an ex policeman and an excellent driver.



He [Gerry] said he lived in Montreal and his wife was a lawyer. They had a 12 year old daughter and a five year old son. He said he was 62 and hoped he would still be around to watch his son graduate from University. As we drove around, he pointed out various sights and explained them to us.

When we came to Notre' Dame Cathedral we got off the bus for a tour of the inside of the Cathedral. It did not look very special outside but once inside it took your breath away with all of its beauty and color. [Highlights: Woodcarvings, paint color, corbels, gold gilt, layout, statues, stained glass, composition of all to each other and on and on.]



The décor was a feast for the eyes - "where do we look next". Everyone was snapping photos or walking around taking in as many details as possible. Before leaving we also took pictures outside of various buildings of interest.

Our next trip was to go up the "mountain" (or should we say hill!) to get a view of the older section of housing as we headed toward St. Joseph's Oratory. Gerry explained different kinds of architecture and the prices of the housing. When we reached the top of the hill, we walked around to take pictures of the St. Joseph building, as well as the grounds and the building opposite which was now "Le Cours Mount Hotel".

We were rounded up for our run down the hill toward the St. Lawrence River to an older section of town. Gerry made suggestions of things to do for our free afternoon and evening. The bus let us out to walk a mere block to our upstairs café for lunch. The café was decorated in Victorian style and Nola and Barbara joined us. The food was very good but a huge amount for a lunch. At any rate, we all thought it was tasty and we had plenty of time to visit. We even had enough time to visit outside with various people



before boarding the bus.

Doug and I took the bus back to the hotel and then went down to the underground shopping mall to catch the metro to the Botanical Gardens. We got off at the wrong stop and the ticket taker let us back on the metro to go to the correct stop. We then walked a long steep hill to the entry of the gardens. We knew we made a correct choice right away and took many photos of the flowers and grounds of the various sections. It covered

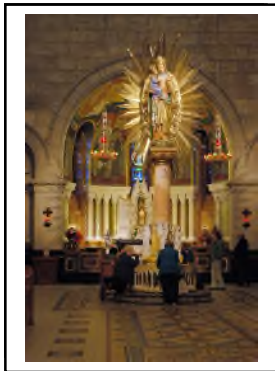
180 acres but we probably saw just one third of it by the time we were pooped. We returned by Metro to the underground shopping area and decided to eat at Subway for

our dinner. We then walked the rest of the way back to the hotel and returned to our room to watch TV and read books before turning in for the night.

Thursday - September 21, 2006 - Montmorency Falls - St. Anne de Beaupre' -  
Quebec City, Quebec

We ate our last breakfast in the hotel and headed off for the bus. We were on our way to Quebec City, with a couple of stops in between. It was windy, cloudy, and rather dreary looking out as we stopped at a gas station for a restroom break. I bought some gum and Hershey bars with almonds. When we came close to noon, Gerry explained that we were going to eat at Montmorency Inn. This Inn sat up high on a hill and after we were done eating we could walk to Montmorency Falls via a walk way and a bridge.

We sat with the Taylors, Catalanos, and Tapps and all enjoyed the meal. Doug and I then walked the trail to the falls and took many different pictures of the falls, the bridge above it, the St. Lawrence River, and surrounding grounds. The falls dropped 272 feet which made them higher than Niagara Falls. [But they were not as "showy" as Niagara.]



We traveled on the road along the Beaupre shore and headed for a visit to Saint Anne de Beaupre and its famous basilica, St. Anne's Bonne venture Church. The outside was gorgeous and yet it was even more beautiful inside. It was completely different in décor than Notre' Dame Cathedral in Montreal but just as beautiful. The copper doors at the front of the church were wonderful religious scenes in relief. Once again we took photos of the inside and outside. The surprise was that the downstairs housed a chapel as large as the upstairs yet in all different colors.

We were soon on the road again for our ride into Quebec City. We went through the more modern part to reach the "Old Town" section with its cobblestone streets, brightly painted shops, huge Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac Hotel, gated entries and an over view of the St. Lawrence River. The hotel sat on a cliff that rose above the St. Lawrence River and faced an island between two sections of the river. Keys were delivered to us by Gerry who gave us our last instructions as to our evening meal event and reminded us that our city tour would take place tomorrow morning. The lobby of the hotel had all kinds of wood décor - wood ceiling, wainscoting, big French style furniture under 20 foot tall ceilings, with huge windows draped in velvet, beautiful carpets and loaded with people coming and going. The main hall to the dining room was filled with shops selling trinkets (all things Canadian), furs, artwork, toys for children and Men's and Women's clothing stores. We soon found our way to our room, which was large and comfortable.

After settling in a bit, taking some photos out of the windows, we soon dressed up for our 3.5 hour dinner service in the main dining room of the hotel. We joined Ruth and Shelly plus Fred and Barbara for this experience. We had plenty of time for chatting between courses. The room was cozy with fireplaces burning wood, high back chairs, large tables, intimate seating arrangements and lots of conversation. We all took in the experience but thought the food lacked in the flavor department. The highlight was the dessert! (HMMMM isn't it always?)

### Friday - September 22, 2006 - Quebec City, Quebec

We ate breakfast in the hotel café on the first floor which was divided up into many different little rooms and porches. The buffet was unending in its choices of food. We finished and went outside to board the bus. We had a city guide named "Olivia" and he began pointing out various sights of interest near the hotel and had the driver move forward when someone said we were missing a couple. He had the driver stop and get Gerry. Gerry then said for us to go on and he would find the couple and get them to us at the next stop. By the time we reached the lower part of the "Old Town" they were waiting for us. Gerry boarded the bus and said "Go easy on them, they were helping a handicapped person in his wheelchair". The bus load got off on this street after Gerry told us that was a joke to ease the tension!! Everyone laughed as Richard and Rose smiled. Olivia then took us on a walking tour of the lower section of the old city with explanations as to what all we were seeing. Periodically Doug and I wandered off to take our pictures and then rejoined the group. The lower old town allowed us a different perspective of the Hotel Le Chateau Frontenac and how it sat on the cliffs above us.



Olivia pointed out a stair case coming down the cliff to the lower level which they called the "Break your neck stairs" and said we should go down them but **not up** as they really were tiring. Once again we found many little shops, cobblestone roads, heard musicians playing on the street for money, and saw a wonderful mural of the history of Quebec painted on a building.

We boarded the bus again for a ride to the Citadel overlooking the St. Lawrence River where the troops held off any enemies coming from the river. This was on the same cliff as the hotel but outside the city walls. He also pointed out gardens, housing, stone entry gates, the capital of the province, and we saw troops lining up to honor someone coming into the city. We were dropped off at the hotel in time to find our own lunch place and spend the rest of the day as each of us chose.

Doug and I chose to walk down the street to a Crepe Café for lunch. We were early and were seated right away. It soon filled up with locals. It was interesting to hear the younger people speak in both French and English with ease. After our lunch we strolled the streets taking photos of the housing, businesses, Entry Gates and their walls, statues, hanging baskets of flowers, and anything else we found of interest. We stopped into the "Continental" Restaurant to see if we could get a reservation for dinner and we were put on their list for a 6:30 PM dinner. We went back to the hotel to freshen up and I read my book while Doug took photos off our cameras and loaded them onto the computer.

Later we headed for the French Restaurant. Nice ambient restaurant, celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> year, with linen table cloths and napkins and waiters all dressed in black and very helpful. We fell in love with their food and thought this was much better than the 3.5 hour long dinner in the hotel. Two other couples from our group came in awhile after we did so as we were leaving we stopped at their table to chat. We told them we liked the food here better than the hotel and later on they told us they agreed.



We walked around outside after dinner and took “Night Photos” of the hotel, statues, and some shops. We both agreed that we would like to return to this city to spend more time on our own.

We were off to bed to watch a little TV before reading our books and falling asleep.

### Saturday - September 23, 2006 - Through Quebec Province to Ottawa, Ontario

We were up at 6:00 AM so as to repack, eat breakfast one last time in Le Chateau Frontenac before boarding the bus at 8:00 AM. It rained through the entire drive. When we stopped for a restroom break at McDonalds, everyone was happy this was a bus day in the rain rather than raining on us walking somewhere. [This was a positive thinking group.]

We drove several miles before lunch in the rain. Gerry said that they normally seated his groups outside to enjoy the view of a pond and gardens but that did not happen as the rain continued. We ate our lunch in a hotel that had a huge buffet table offering everything imaginable. Some of us went to the covered part of the patio and agreed it would have been a nice view on a sunny day.

Gerry said before we reached Ottawa we were going to stop at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police training center. He showed us a movie on the bus of the horses and their riders dancing and performing drills. He said the horses had to be black, 16 to 17 hands tall and bred by the RCMP so as to control their lineage. We also learned that both the horse and rider had to have three years of training before performing for the first time.



We had a guide walk us through the museum, training building, and two different sets of horse stalls to view the horses. They indeed were tall horses. He also told us that the riders had to

change horses periodically as they did not want anyone to become too close to one horse as this could harm the progression of the training. We saw pictures of Queen Elizabeth visiting the place in 2003.

The “Tack Room” was spotlessly clean. Each horse had a special spot for his harness and bridle and other decorative paraphernalia. All the horses were indeed black with a few



white hooves showing here and there. The movie of the dances and drills was fascinating to watch. The timing of the dances or drills was figured on seconds to make a move. One batch of stalls had all horses blanketed in cobalt blue blankets with a gold Canadian Maple leaf on the rump. The guide explained that they kept the blankets on them to keep them warm so they would not grow “winter

hair” as they would be performing again before long. [They had just returned from a

USA performance.] Everyone enjoyed learning about the horses and the Mounted Police and their maneuvers. We exited through the gift shop so I bought my horse loving sister, Jean, a magnet of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police group in the picture as an additional Birthday gift.

When we reached Ottawa, the capital city of Canada, the rain stopped and the sun was out. As we drove toward the 600 room Chateau Laurier Hotel, Gerry pointed out two sets of falls, the Ottawa River, the Parliament buildings, the Prime Minister's residence and our hotel. This turned out to be our biggest room yet. We had the rest of the afternoon and evening to ourselves and decided to eat in "Zoë's Bar" right off the lobby. [Sandy ate pita pizza with goat cheese, sun dried tomatoes, artichoke hearts, pesto, greenery, and melted cheese. + French fries. It was delicious.] We took our time eating as our table was next to a huge window that overlooked a busy street so we watched many different people going many different directions, looked over the various modes of transportation as well as the dress of the locals.

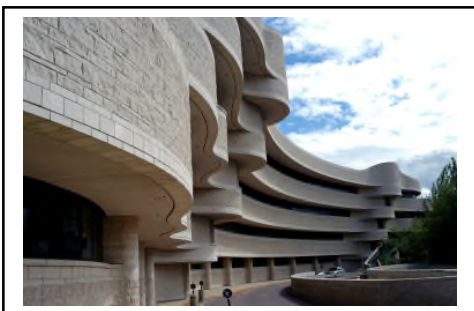
We finally retired to our room. Doug loaded the computer with our photos so as to clear the cameras for the next day. We both read books. Doug fell asleep but I watch an A&E program on "Cher" and her life before going to sleep.



#### Sunday - September 24, 2006 - Ottawa, Ontario

I was up @ 6:05 AM for some reason so I got dressed before Doug this time. We went down to another great buffet breakfast. We were ready to board the bus at 8:20 AM for a city tour. First stop was to take a tour through the main Parliament building. We had to go through metal detection and then a guide took us through and explained what we were seeing. The building was architecturally great looking outside

and fantastic inside. We saw the Parliament House and Senate rooms, gorgeous paintings, very ornate ceilings, pillars, wood carvings, and stucco reliefs on the walls. The library was the only thing that had not burned in a big fire and it was quite fantastic. All of it was very grand. When we walked outside a group of police on risers were singing and we found out this was the day of the Canadian Police and Peace Officers' 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Memorial Service. A policeman handed Sandy a booklet which explained the program for the day's activities and then it listed the names of the deceased officers, their rank, the day they died, what division they were in and then directed you to the particular memorial plaque where you would find a particular name. Only looking at the photos can explain the architectural details, which were so varied.



We were called to the bus and continued our city tour by Gerry. The next stop we got off to go into the Museum of Civilization. Doug and I broke away from the group several times to take pictures. We spent all of our time in the history area and we wished we would have seen more of the art. We had the afternoon to ourselves so we decided to walk back to the hotel by crossing the Alexandra Bridge which allowed us to take

pictures of the outside of the museum, Parliament buildings and the hotel across the river, the falls, flowers, and many other things. It was very windy so the walk across the bridge was a challenge but the wind cooled us off, as it was also hot outside. We found a little outdoor café and ate a late lunch there – pizza and cokes – comfort food! We then walked down to the Market and looked around and found some maple butter to purchase. Next we stopped at Chapters Bookstore that Gerry talked about and Sandy bought the book “Dexter” which Gerry said would be a new show on ShowTime this fall. We finally returned to our room and Doug napped while Sandy read her book.

We ate in the hotel dining room with Doris and Grace at 5:30 PM. We had such a good time we did not leave until 10:00 PM. We spent a lot of the evening laughing. Finally we headed to bed.

### Monday – September 25, 2006 – River cruise on St. Lawrence River Then to Toronto, Ontario

We had another last buffet breakfast at another great hotel. We loved the crisp bacon, maple glazed crepes and apple juice at this buffet. I wished I would have brought my camera as the East Parliament building looked just like the old Victorian style house they always show at Halloween. Finally I decided to get my camera, came back and took three pictures of the building. We left Ottawa @ 8:20 AM driving along the canal a little ways and heading toward Rockport, Canada where we would cruise the Thousand Islands. The ride would also include a buffet lunch on the St. Lawrence River Boat.



We all got aboard the boat and they started off telling us about the cruise, what we were seeing and facts about the St. Lawrence River. Here are a few of the facts: The St. Lawrence flows northeast. It is fed by all of the Great Lakes and finally empties into the Atlantic Ocean. It is divided down the middle with half in Canada and half in the USA. If we did not know

we were on a river we would have thought it was a large lake. We saw humble houses and expensive mansions. We saw one place that had a house on one island, a bridge over to another small island and sported both a Canadian and American flag. Since Canada and USA share the river one island was in America and the other was in Canada. We joked about the fact that the bridge would have been the smallest border to guard against illegal aliens! And how would one guard the middle of the river from illegal aliens. [This put a different perspective on building walls on borders!]



We especially liked the heart shaped island that housed a mansion, all kinds of guests houses, servants quarters and was built by a rich New Yorker for his wife, but she had died before it was finished. This one was quite awesome in size of the island, houses, gardens, trees, etc. We enjoyed the ride, took many photos, with the sun peaking out of the clouds periodically.

We had a bathroom break before boarding the bus and when Sandy got to the bus, she was lucky to find that Barbara had her jacket, as she had left it on the boat and did not realize it. Thank you Barbara!!

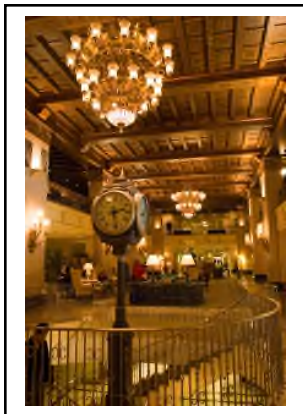
After riding several miles, we took a break at "Tim Horton's" and we purchased cappuccino and donuts and used the rest rooms. The temperature outside had dropped and it was very windy. After 15 minutes we were on the bus again and were soon slowed down to a crawl due to road construction. This slowed down our arrival time in Toronto from 4:30 PM to 5:15 PM, but all of the rooms were ready.



We had signed up to eat at Beni-Hanna's with Don & Barbara, Richard & Rose, Doris, and Grace. We agreed to meet at 6:30 PM and we were the last ones to arrive. We were entertained by the cook and enjoyed our meal. None of us was able to eat all the food but it was good. We left the restaurant at 9:00 PM and headed to our room. Once again Doug loaded the photos onto the computer. We cooled down in the room, watched a bit of TV and read our books before going to sleep.

### Tuesday - September 26, 2006 Sightsee Toronto, Ontario

The Royal York Hotel room was yet another unique old hotel with 1300 rooms. Our room had two rooms made into one room and they kept both bathrooms so we were each able to have our own bathroom. We also had a sitting room and two closets. Once again the buffet breakfast was excellent with many choices. We went to the lobby to meet the bus for our city tour by Gerry. We left at 8:45 AM and as we wound through the city he explained what we were seeing. Our goal today was three fold; city tour, CN Tower observation deck, and find some post cards.



When we arrived at the CN Tower [tallest free standing building in the world at 1815 feet] there were

several people who declined the ride up to 1300 square feet to reach the observation deck. The ride up was in a glass elevator looking over the city. We had to go through an unusual security system .... You were poofed with air which absorbed any explosive chemicals which would then be detected by sensors in the machine you passed through to continue on. The ride to the observation deck was only one minute & 30 seconds long. This took you to an enclosed area you walked all around to see the layout of the city and water below. We took many photos. Then we walked down one flight of stairs

to be on an open air deck that was all screened in. It was impossible to take photos from that deck due to the heavy duty screen to keep people from jumping. We went back upstairs and walked through the restaurant for different views. Then we went down stairs again to stand on the glass floor to look down upon the city below. We then caught the elevator down the tower. We enjoyed this stop as it was a new perspective compared to driving in among the sky scrapers. Once down the elevator you had to walk through the gift shop to the outside where we found flower gardens and water fountains to take pictures of as well as the skyline.

Sandy took a picture of Richard and Rose in front of the fountain with the salmon (metal sculptures) jumping up to higher levels and they then used Sandy's camera to take a picture of Doug and Sandy together. Once again we were gathered together to get on the bus with more city tour and finally dropped off, as requested, at different spots.

We decided to go back to the hotel and have lunch in York's Kitchen. Sandy had a hot celery and apple puree soup with a ham & cheese sandwich with cole slaw which was wonderful. Doug had an 8 ounce hamburger with a salad and cole slaw. We each had a coke and the bill was \$40.00!

Sandy was hunting for postcards and they were a dickens to find. I finally asked the Concierge and she sent me to a souvenir shop across the street. I found two that were OK and purchased them and then walked to the train station but they did not have any at all. We headed back to the hotel and took pictures of the boulevard flowers before going to our room to rest before dinner and then to see the play "Legends".

I read my book while Doug got onto the computer. We decided to eat in the hotel Pub at 5:30 PM and had French Onion Soup and half sandwiches. Then we went to the lobby to "people watch" as we waited for everyone to come downstairs for the ride to the theater.



The theater reminded us of the Hoyt Sherman Place in Des Moines and we settled in for the play. At mid time break, a lot of discussion amounted to the "Non-acting" of Linda Evans and disappointment in the subject matter and how good they both looked due to plastic surgery. The actual stars were the maid, stripper, and the show agent telling the story. We all agreed those three could really act.

When we returned to the hotel, Doug was asleep immediately. I sat up and read until midnight before going to sleep.



### Wednesday - September 27, 2006 - Trip to Niagara Falls on the Canadian side For a day & back to Toronto, Ontario

We were up at 5:50 AM to dress for the trip to Niagara Falls. We ate our buffet breakfast with Fred & Barbara. The bus took off at 8:00 PM heading south. We arrived in Niagara Falls at 9:40 AM. We passed through the "Maiden of the

Mist" gate & grabbed our tickets, took a restroom break, and then were give blue capes with hoods to keep us dry. The boat was very crowded along the rail so Doug and I decided to stand in the middle behind the box that held the life savers, as this allowed us some elbow room. The "Maiden of the Mist" was entirely full. It was one thing to see the falls from a distance but yet another new adventure to see them right up close. We were actually inside the mist of the Canadian Niagara Falls. Everyone else got shoes and legs wet but the box in the middle protected Doug and I from the mist! We all agreed that this ride was indeed a must if you want to experience the falls.



We had free time after the falls to purchase post cards, trinkets, etc. and then meet the bus. Doug and I took photos of parks, flowers, and double Decker buses. Michelle picked us up and we then drove to the land above the falls which was another view as we looked down on the horseshoe shape of the Canadian Niagara Falls. Admittedly they are really exquisite to see and the unending "rush" of the water is awesome.

We boarded and were off on the bus to wind our way around Niagara Gorge and saw a world famous Floral Clock, the giant hydro-electric plants, and Niagara Parks School of Horticulture on our way to the town of "Niagara on the Lake". We had a wonderful buffet lunch at "Queen's Land Inn" and had fun looking around in the various rooms before leaving to visit the town area. (The town was founded after the Revolutionary



War and touted as one of the best preserved towns in North America.) The town has an annual "Shaw Festival" featuring the plays of George Bernard Shaw as well as other noted playwrights.

The quaint town reminded us of being in a small town in France or England. We had one hour and twenty minutes to mill around. The boulevards were full of flowers, businesses had hanging pots of flowers at their doors, and the shops and hotels were quaint. We enjoyed the visit, took many photos, and even had enough time to shop in various shops. When our time was up, we walked back to the bus and boarded for our return trip to Toronto. Gerry said he would give us quiet time since most of the people were sleeping anyway! Ha

We had enough time left over when we got back to the hotel to freshen up and change clothes for the evening "Farewell Dinner". I took the small Sony camera so as to capture everyone for the last time. The dinner was held in the hotel's "York Kitchen" which had been rearranged especially for our group. We had cocktails first and chatted and then dinner. We sat across from Margo and Harvey and Ramon and Judith and I sat next to

Bill and Lou. It was a good evening filled with much laughter and with Doug's help, I was able to get everyone's picture.

Everyone seemed to have a good time, our food was very good, and once again we agreed that Tauck Tour people are a happy bunch. We returned to our rooms after many goodbyes.

**Thursday - September 28, 2006 - Day to leave Toronto, Ontario  
to Des Moines, Iowa, USA**

We did not have to get up early as it was our day to return to Des Moines and we did not have to be at the airport until 11 AM. We ate a leisurely breakfast right next to Ralph and Linda and visited while we ate, for the last time.

We then returned to our room to re-pack for the trip home. Doug's suitcase was too heavy so we packed some of his shoes in my suitcase and that solved that problem. Gerry had arranged for the taxi to pick us and Don and Barbara up at 10:00 AM. It was a rather speedy ride as we exchanged glances of "what's this all about?" now and then. [Doug sat in front while Don, Barbara, and I sat in the back. We were not unhappy to get out of the taxi! Ha]

The Don and Barbara were flying Air Canada and we were flying United so we went separate ways. We went through customs in Canada for the USA and then security. We had time to spare and Canadian cash to spend so we bought some things in the duty free shop and also ran into Don and Barb there. We chatted for the last time and then Doug and I ate lunch in the airport café. Then we walked to our gate. Our flight was to leave at 1:40 PM and it did without any hitches. We arrived in Chicago for our last flight home which seemed like it was shorter than 45 minutes this time. I hand carried the Sony camera so we looked at some of the last pictures taken of the Farewell Dinner and talked about the trip and how nice it would be to be on our own in Quebec City and Ottawa sometime in the future. Another good trip ended with smiles. "Home again home again jiggydy Jag."

By Sandy Rasmussen 10/21/2006