

### Pittsford to Lyons (33 Miles)

Early rising once again to get on the road or should we say water is the tone of the morning. We are running late as our bodies are still adjusting to the workout and paddling / activity schedule. A few cups of coffee later and some chocolate chip bagels later and we are as they say 'cooking on gas'. We meet the local village works department guys who have waited patiently and throw the kayaks back into the water. Christine, the director of tourism is in my Spare Seat and Rosie was in Glenn's Spare Seat. We paddle off under another stunning railway bridge towards Fairport.

Quite quickly we arrive at Fairport with a crew of well wishers and the owners awaiting a cruise. Simon our resident support team man is there with video and cameras to get some shots from the water. We stop for a brief break and then paddle on surfing in the wake of the boat. This little bit of wash-hanging speeds up the journey time. We are entering the 75mile stretch of canal with beautiful murals painted under bridges and on structures. They are all depicting life on the canal system and are magnificent with vibrant colours and historical scenes.

As we pass through the lock system we meet two fellow paddlers, Mark De Cracker and another paddler (sorry I cant remember the name). We paddle together following the barge. Around this stretch we get to divert from the main canal and paddle through the back waters of the Clinton Ditch, the original waterway. Finally after a few hours of paddling we reach the base of the canal boats at their Marina which includes canoe and kayak hire and a fleet of these beautiful boats. We are joined by a couple in their Kevlar canoe who paddle down to the next lock with the team. The 'Forrest Gump' phenomenon is in full swing.

As we get to Lock 29 we are set upon by Palmyra's famous Erie Canal pirates. A short battle of wits commences and ends in a stand off. We agree to head down to yet another beautiful village location along the banks of this amazing canal. It is hard to convey in words the extent of the generosity, hospitality and fine spirit that each and every one of these communities displays. As we keep saying 'There must be something in the water!'. We pass though another pristine lock manned by Lock Keepers who consistently prove to be friendly guardians of the waterways. Glenn has been photographing and documenting the people we meet on this life blood canal system which sets the subculture for NY State along the corridor. I can honestly say I have never consistently witnessed such positive and welcoming people with such pride in their communities.

We round the corner at Palmyra to find the Pirates Lair and a beautiful café called Muddy Waters where we are greeted by the mayor and possibly held hostage by the pirates! From there we heading down to Lyons and I change my Spare Seat Passenger with Doug Wilson joining me. We are paddling in glorious sunshine and as we have been heading East the canal has become a myriad of stunning shades of vibrant green dotted with the red maple trees. It is fantastic to meet and spend time paddling with so many different characters in the Spare Seat. Rosie and Glenn have jokingly dubbed their kayak the love boat and are forging a great friendship having spent 4 days paddling together.

We are running behind schedule today with a long day of mileage and the accumulation of paddling hours giving us a little fatigue. We swap in the final paddler for the day in Newark where I am joined by the Jolly Roger, another local volunteer who does lots for the canal heritage. Roger proves to be a straight talking and passionate man with a mischievous twinkle in his eye and a deep hearty laugh. Without doubt he makes a great Pirate King. We head down towards Lyon where we will stop for the day and make use of the old dry dock.

The day is dragging and we are tired. Upon arrival we get the warmest welcome from Kimberly who runs the Vintage Gardens B &B. If you are conjuring up a small guesthouse then think again. This is a huge house set in several acres of amazing trees and flowers. It is a mixture between stately home and the most luxurious Victorian hotel with exquisite décor and every room presents elegance. It is a great place to rest for the night. We change clothes and are off to the Newark County Club where the village community are putting on a performance highlighting local history including hauntings, stories of the Mora motor car etc. The food and company is great and we enjoy the evening. We head back to the Vintage B & B and check out the owners man cave where we sample some great whisky and play Fozzball. We fall asleep with huge smiles on our faces!