



(Above) Ian Banfield cruises the Credit River near Cheltenham. (Below) Jennifer and Ian Banfield on one of the few portages.

Once you have worked out the logistics, consider your route. The river moves quickly in spring. There are plenty of Class 1 (fast-flowing water— aka “swifts”) and a few Class 2 rapids (some small “hay-stacks” or swells) along the way. You can travel safely without a topographic map, but it doesn’t hurt to have one or a GPS system. The river doesn’t fork in many places, with one notable exception being just before the first bridge north of Glen Williams (near Sheridan Nurseries). Stay to the right here.

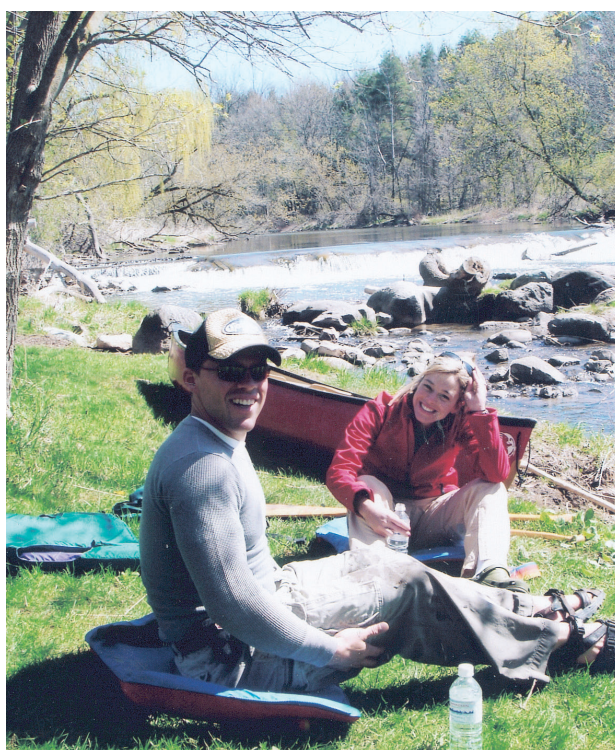
An excellent resource would be expert canoe tripper Kevin Callan’s book *A Paddler’s Guide to Weekend Wilderness Adventures in Southern Ontario*. It covers the Credit and a number of other water routes in our region. It is also a good idea to revisit and view some of your old Bill Mason video productions showing white water technique. It is wise to have someone proficient in the stern. Two ‘novice’ paddlers may be asking for trouble.

The next thing you want to consider is your craft.

Most kayaks are buoyant enough to handle the journey. However, with weight (other people and gear) and freeboard (amount of canoe above the water) an issue in canoes, I personally choose to use my Mad River royalex construction canoe. It has give to it, excellent buoyancy and if you hit the odd shoal or rock garden, it’s like the old Timex watch commercial says, “takes a licking and keeps on ticking”.

An aluminium canoe would also work. Avoid using treasured cedar strip canoes. You should go reasonably scratch-free but ‘bumps and grinds’ can be expected.

Another consideration is timing. There are a few places to start, and I have tried them all with success. The further upstream you go, of course, the longer the paddle downstream— Inglewood, Boston Mills, Cheltenham, Terra Cotta or Glen Williams. The trip from Inglewood to Glen Williams, for example,



takes about half to three-quarters of a day. Terra Cotta’s park makes a fine rest stop. The river moves you quickly so it can be challenging to remain static on the water for a break. The next fast water or bend in the river can catch you unprepared.

If you only have a few hours, the best trip is Terra Cotta to Glen Williams. To go all the way to Norval you will need the better part of the day starting after breakfast from Inglewood or Cheltenham and finishing late afternoon (and it can be tricky getting out at the right spot ahead of the falls). With the longer days of sunlight in the spring it is possible to hit the river at Terra Cotta after work and do it between 4 and 7 p.m.

Safety is, without a doubt, the most important aspect of the day. There are many things you must do to make your excursion safe and enjoyable. Here’s a checklist to consider;

1. Lifejackets (for everyone), bailer, rescue line, rope in the painter rings, whistle (by law)
2. A good reliable craft
3. Cell phone (waterproofed), a camera (same)
4. An extra paddle in case of breakage (don’t be up the creek without one)
5. Let someone know your itinerary. Leave it with them.
6. Give each stretch of swifts and rapids a good look before negotiating them— avoid going right after heavy rains or melt (usually the last week or two of April and the first 2-3 weeks of May are ideal)
7. Lash packs with lunch and other equipment in securely (around the thwarts, etc.) in case you tip. Don’t drink the river water.
8. Wear appropriate clothing for the conditions. Chances are you won’t be swimming at this time of year but check out the weather forecast. Be prepared to get your feet wet. Don’t be surprised to see a few black flies and go prepared with lotion. They can be buzzing as early as late April or the first week of May.
9. Take your necessary car keys and valuables— for example, you may elect to have lunch in one of the establishments along the way.
10. Communication and level of expertise. It’s wise to talk about how you will co-ordinate the trip with what strokes will you need, draws, prys, feathering, back paddling.

You will have an opportunity to see plenty of birds and plant life. There will be migrating ducks, plenty of kingfishers and a variety of other bird species to observe. Spring plants are usually budding and you may see some colour in marsh marigolds and purple iris. The trees should be getting ready to ‘pop’ and

“Anyone who says they like portaging is either a liar or crazy”— Path of the Paddle author Bill Mason

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