

A LOTTA MIATA

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There's no shortage of Mazda Miata jokes, but those that like the compact sports car like it in a big way.

About 50 Miata owners came out on a drizzly Saturday morning earlier this month to celebrate the season-opening ride with the Trillium Miata Club.

Outside the Georgetown Armoury the parking lot was lined with Mazda Miatas old and new.

"The Miata brings out a lot of passion," Gary Svoboda, a member of the club, said. "This is the British sports car they never built."

Also known as the MX-5, the Mazda Miata arrived in Canada in 1991, fulfilling a need in the market for a small, lightweight and inexpensive sports car.

"It's reliable," Rose Stipanitz, the club's president, said. "It's easy to fix, there are Mazda deal-

erships all over North America."

There are also clubs all over the world. In a couple of weeks, Stipanitz is headed to Italy to meet up with a Miata club abroad where a member of another club will lend her one of their cars.

The Trillium Miata Club currently has about 340 members, with about 180 Miatas registered with the club. It's the largest club in Canada, and possibly one of the oldest.

"We joined this club because of the car," Svoboda said, "but as time goes on, it's more of a social club."

Despite the dreary weather, about 50 drivers would head out to tour the Forks of the Credit in their Mazdas.

"That's what we're about - enjoying the scenery and the twists and curves," Stipanitz said. "This car isn't designed to go in a straight line fast. It's designed to have a whole lot of fun in the corners."



Bryan Myers/Metroland

Doug Dorsey, wearing his Jedi garb in honour of Star Wars Day, heads off on the Trillium Miata Club's season opener, where more than 50 Mazda Miatas gathered for a day of touring the Forks of the Credit.

To navigate the twists and turns, drivers can download the route to their GPS, but back when the club started, drivers and their passenger would need to bring along paper maps.

To ensure no Miata is left behind, groups of about 10 set out every 15 minutes, with each group assigned a leader and a

sweep.

The sweep's responsibility is to make sure all vehicles make the proper turns, and to locate any lost drivers.

One of club's longest standing members, Liz Burns, holds the title of master sweep.

"I'm usually the sweep of the last group," Burns said.

Burns has been a member since August of 1991, her Miata is a special edition from 1991 with 300,000 kilometres on the odometer. She said she expects to get one more season out of her original Miata.

Following the tour, club members returned to the Georgetown Armoury for chili.

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