

Opportunity to ride the steel rails

If you're looking for some family summer fun, why not take a leisurely trip on the York Durham Heritage Railway's Moraine Train this August holiday weekend?

The leisurely 40 km round trip takes you on one of Ontario's most scenic railway journeys, climbing through the beautiful Oak Ridges Moraine as it winds its way to Uxbridge through densely wooded areas and farm fields. Trains leave Stouffville station at 1 p.m. on the Saturday, Sunday and Monday of the holiday weekend.

Enjoy the view from one of the vintage railway cars, or from the spacious baggage car. Snacks and souvenirs are available on the train, which can be booked for special events such as family birthday parties. Corporations and private groups can also charter the train for midweek and evening weekend runs.

Upcoming special events on the train include a wine tasting Sept. 17, a Halloween ride Oct. 25 and the Ride with Santa Nov. 30, with the popular Murder Mystery dinner rides beginning in September. For more information, call 905-852-3696 or visit www.ydhr.on.ca.

Luke Soup... by Luke Anderson



I have become Toronto's biggest local tourist.

A couple of weeks ago, a good old mountain biking friend of mine from British Columbia drove his trusty, rusty Toyota across the country to come and visit. Naturally, like any host, I felt the stress of having to show him a good time.

Under normal circumstances Carl's visit would have been easily tended to, had I been able to throw on the chamois shorts and rip some serious single track [simply put... gone biking]. With the bike option crossed off the list on the clipboard of fun, Carl, the tree-hugging, born and raised mountain dwelling GOR (good old raisins and peanuts) eater quickly prepared himself for a week long adventure through the concrete jungle.

He arrived at 10 o'clock on Monday morning. I gave him a hug and a high-five, he threw his backpack and sleeping bag on the couch and by quarter after we were aboard an astonishingly on-time Wheel Trans bus to the zoo, accompanied by my good old friend, Sarah.

Having just completed a 3,600 km road trip by himself, Carl looked surprisingly alive. I had not seen him since my bedridden hospital days in Vancouver way back in November, and he was amazed at how far I had progressed, physically and mentally.

He was also amazed at how unbelievably high energy Sarah was. Under normal circumstances she is a chatty, energized person but we were going to the zoo, and she was hovering a foot off her seat! Truthfully, Carl and I were also very excited about the

day ahead of us; however Carl's middle name is "relaxed". As for me, well I think I would have been hovering too had I not been seat-belted into my 350 lb. wheelchair.

The three of us took in almost all of the animal exhibits and it wasn't because of inaccessibility issues that we were not able to see everything, we had just run out of time. We had an amazing day, enjoyed an awesome lunch that Sarah had prepared, and all of us got a little bit too much sun.

The whole day I wheeled around the zoo with complete confidence in myself; for the first time since my accident I didn't feel injured, I didn't feel burdened. Maybe it was because I was in the company of two close friends, or perhaps it was a feeling that came as a result of being able to get around so easily.

Nonetheless, that day marked the beginning of feeling like my old self again. I don't know, perhaps Mom was right all along, maybe I just belong in a zoo. Whether it's entertaining zoo-goers from within or outside a cage, I believe I could pull it off. Heck, tie a bunch of red wagons together, hitch them onto the back of my wheelchair, fill them with hay, charge a buck a head and we've got one mighty fine zoo trolley/rickshaw company!

Monday came to a close only after a rendezvous to my favourite watering hole down the street, where everybody knows my name... [had to throw that in there]. Tuesday proved to be just as exciting. Neither Carl nor I had been up the CN Tower, so it was agreed that we would hop on the subway and head down there.

Everything went as planned except for

one little bump. While **c a r e f u l l y** disembarking the subway car I felt the right side of my chair elevate slightly. I removed my hand from the throttle to investigate. There, beneath my right rear wheel, was a brand-new black leather dress shoe worn by one remarkably silent man -- given the situation -- with one agitated-looking face.

Assessing the situation, I swiftly proceeded to finish off/emblazon a nice fresh tread pattern on his shoe and flatten the remaining digits of his foot. After I had sincerely apologized, the man gathered up enough muscles in his face to smile and except my apology. The whole foot running over thing has happened a number of times now, and I really am sorry about all those people I've run over, but you must admit that the whole ordeal is quite hilarious.

The rest of the week went by way too fast. Carl and I made trips to the Science Centre, Queen Street West and Harbourfront, and had lots of little adventures around my neighborhood. Looking back on Carl's visit leaves everything but a stressful impression; we laughed and cried, but most of the tears were from laughing too hard.

Having Carl around pushed me to try new things and helped boost my confidence. He also helped me reinforce my understanding of the term "Pick yourself up and dust yourself off" and reassured me that I am still the same old Luke, ready for adventure... like my most recent fishing trip.

Ah, but that's another column.

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