

Northeast, May 2016

We are on the road again (literally this time) on a trip that has so far taken us from home to central Michigan and then to Ontario. The main purpose of the trip is to visit friends in Ontario, Massachusetts and New York so we are essentially doing a circular tour of the Northeast.

We left home on May 5 and spent two nights getting to our first friends' home in Kemptville, just south of Ottawa.

A very nice Italian restaurant we found in Toronto on one of our overnight stops



Bill and Monica have been friends since University days and, although we don't see them as often as we might like, we have kept in close touch over the years. It was particularly nice to be able to stay with them for two full days and catch up on our respective lives since we last met. That in itself was a

subject of debate, but I think we all eventually agreed that it had been about five years.



A walk in the woods and along the Rideau River



While staying with Bill and Monica we had an excellent meal at a local Mediterranean restaurant, a Mother's Day brunch in a rustic resort near their home and went for a couple of walks to see some of the local flora. Bill and Monica are active in the local community in promoting retention of forest areas and preserving the wildlife. In addition, of course, we spent a good deal of our time together simply talking and, in the case of Bill and Bob, exchanging corny jokes!



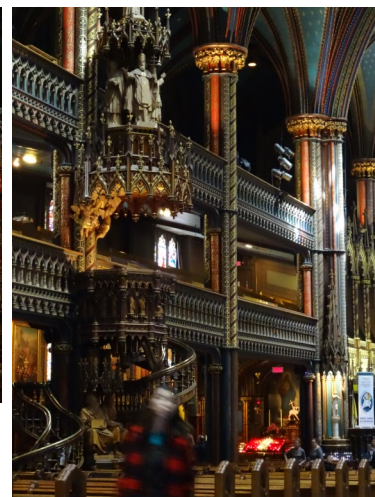
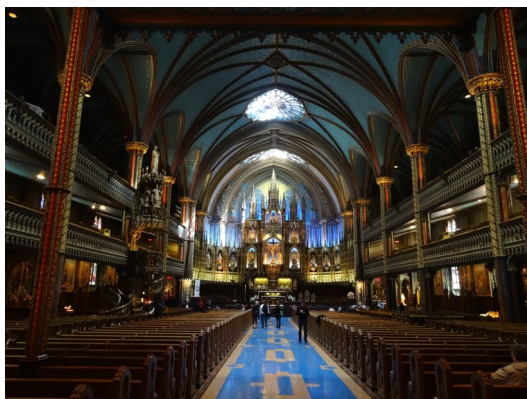
Bill, Monica and Molly

After leaving Kemptville, Molly and I made the three hour, easy drive to Montreal where we checked in at the Downtown Renaissance about 4pm. We found a local Italian restaurant for dinner and then relaxed for a few hours before another good meal close to the hotel.

On Tuesday we purchased two-day tickets for the Hop on/Hop off bus tours of Montreal and, as we have in many cities we found this a great way to see a number of sights in some detail as well as getting a good overview of the whole area. On the first day we made two major stops at the St Joseph Oratory (with its 256 steps up to the main sanctuary) and at the Basilica of Notre Dame. Both were beautiful buildings with splendid interiors and, in the case of the Oratory, had fantastic views over the city and the St Lawrence River. We completed the first day in Old Montreal.



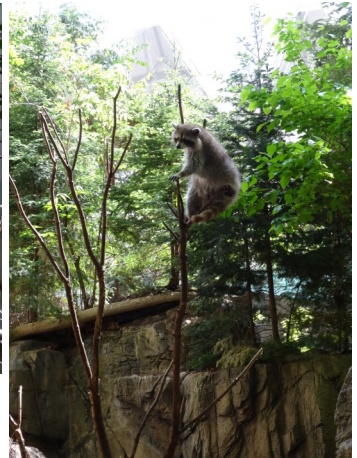
St Joseph Oratory



Notre Dame Basilica.

On Wednesday the tour took us out of the downtown area and our first stop was at the Olympic Stadium (below right), built for the Games in 1976. The complex has now been converted into several tourist attractions (although the original stadium is still used as a covered arena).

We chose to visit the Biodome which contains three eco-systems, much like the one we visited in Singapore or the Eden Project in England. This one is much smaller than either of the others but has some interesting birds, fish and other wildlife in natural settings



We spent almost two hours in the complex and saw a large number of the inhabitants in a very pleasant environment.

We then took the bus on to our second stop (Little Italy) where we had a light pizza and wine lunch sitting in a sidewalk cafe. We then completed the tour and walked back to the hotel after a six hour day out in wonderful weather - warm and sunny!

That concluded our visit to Montreal—probably the sixth time we have been there but always a great place to visit and made all the more interesting by the language and cultural diversity of the city. And it's so close to home!



Montreal

We left Montreal and Canada on Thursday morning and headed south to meet our next friends in Burlington, Vermont. More on this later.

