

# Broadzy's ONE TANK TRIPS

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Last summer I surprised my better half with a trip into our own local wine country when I fell into two tickets to what is called the Epic Wineries Vintage Tasting. Epic is short for Essex, Pelee Island and, actually, I have no idea what the C is for, but it's a group of wineries near Kingsville, Harrow and Amherstburg. They pool their efforts for a number of events we learned, and the Vintage Tasting you might say is their annual soirée or garden party. The wineries take turns hosting it, but last year it was held at the Pelee Island Winery in Kingsville, and it was a perfect day. Lisa knew I had something planned but I only told her to bring something nice to wear on a sunny afternoon.

## Stop #1: PARKS BLUEBERRIES

We got away pretty early and stopped along the way for brunch at Parks Blueberries, a landmark of a place on Hwy. #2 between Bothwell & Thamesville. We were still an hour away from Kingsville but Parks is worth driving

a couple hours to visit just by itself. It's a massive but completely down-home gift shop, bakery and restaurant. This was mid-August, the heart of blueberry season, a time when they must have thousands of visitors every week going through the place, but it was still as authentic as it could possibly be. The food was to die for and you could taste the homemade in it. We weren't dressed for blueberry picking but also couldn't leave without buying some, and we also stocked up on some pastries which came in very handy later on.

## Stop #2: WOODBRIDGE HOUSE B&B

Lisa was still in the dark when we pulled into the driveway at the bed and breakfast which is very conveniently only a stone's throw from the winery.

As we walked in and were greeted by Kathy. She asked if we were here for the **Kingsville Folk Festival**. So at this point Lisa has come to the conclusion that her surprise is a trip to the folk festival. I on the other hand am wondering if we can get tickets to that, too. I'd heard of it, but had no idea that it was on this weekend. The B&B was wonderful, cool and convenient, but I'll get back to that in a bit.

## Stop #3: THE EPIC VINTAGE TASTING

I don't remember at what point Lisa asked why she was wearing a nice summer dress to a folk festival, but I was keeping my secret for as long as possible.



We set out on foot from the B&B to walk into Kingsville and were only a couple minutes down the road when she set her eyes on this beautiful winery. There were white tents set amongst the gardens to hold some wondrous event... and she knew we were going there. And I was pretty damn proud of myself! We went to the Vintage Tasting knowing no one at all, and spent four hours there

having countless conversations, tasting wines from throughout the region, dining on an endless supply of hors d'oeuvres and dancing! Yes, there was a live band, too! Everything was included for one very reasonable price and we were a wee bit tipsy by the time we left, but it was a two minute walk back to the B&B and I had pulled off a wonderful surprise for Lisa. It was a perfect afternoon!

Our favourite wine, by the way, from the many there were to sample, was a Cabernet-Sauvignon from Sprucewood Shores. We wanted to buy some, but Ontario's laws don't permit the sale of one growers wine at another growers winery. That was the only disappointment. I knew we wouldn't have the time to go to Sprucewood Shores on this trip, but I hear it's stunning. Another day perhaps.

## Stop #4: THE KINGSVILLE FOLK FESTIVAL

So we're back at the B&B and it's decision time. The wise decision after a few hours in the sun at a winery would be to have some dinner and lay low.



Photo courtesy of Pelee Island Winery

But there was a folk festival in town—we can't not go to that, can we? At this point only one thing was certain—we're not driving! A phone call, a very affordable cab ride later and voila, we were at Lakeside Park.

At first glance we realized that this



was a perfect place to hold such an event but we also noticed all the folding lawn chairs that people had brought with them. We hadn't planned on coming and had no chairs. Two seconds and a shift of the eyes to the right later and we detected two pretty beat up lawn chairs in the lost and found... so we stole them for a couple hours.

It was a fabulous evening! The bands were fantastic, the sound and volume were perfect, the park setting couldn't have been better. Long before we left we knew that we would come back in the future—it was that good. This is a licensed event and while Lisa stuck with local wines I noticed that they also had local craft beers available. I truly wish I could tell you which brewery they were from, but the long day was catching up to me and I simply don't remember. As the night went on there was a three-piece band on stage, but for a moment there I could very clearly see six of them. So it was time to go. Those pastries from Parks Blueberries came in quite handy as a late night snack!

#### Stop #5: THE HANGOVER

The hangover wasn't horrible, but we were staying in a B&B and I knew we'd be having breakfast with our hostess and possibly some other guests. I was regretting that last beer just a bit. So we walked downstairs for breakfast and sure enough it was a full table of four couples. I was a bit nervous, for all of 30 seconds. That turned out to be one of the best breakfasts and the best conversations we've ever had. All the other couples had come for the Folk

Festival, and two of them were also cycling around Essex County which is notoriously flat. By the time we left, there were handshakes and hugs all around. We've stayed in a number of B&Bs and they never disappoint us—it's always an experience. People are always saying that they want to have an authentic experience when they travel. We're learning that it's much easier than it sounds, if you're willing to step a bit outside of your comfort zone.

#### Stop #6: KINGSVILLE

It was a Monday morning in Kingsville and we spent some time just driving around this absolutely gorgeous Victorian town that we didn't get much of a chance to see on Sunday. It was a quiet morning and we couldn't stay too long, but we could

easily see how much it has to offer a visitor. Kingsville is on Lake Erie to begin with—it's "Canada's Most Southern Town" and the home of Jack Miner, the Father of Conservation. The back streets are lined with Victorian homes; the downtown is very unique and vibrant with a craft brewery, a themed boutique hotel and a bevy of cool shops. We were in **Randy's Antiques** (where I found another classic rock album to add to my collection), **Attic Treasures**, **Windblown & Weathered** and the visitor's centre which is quite stunning. It's a remarkable small town that we have to go back to. Before we left we had lunch at **Annabelle's Tea Room** and I can't begin to describe how unique this Victorian home is—you have to see it to appreciate it, and the food is fantastic, of course.

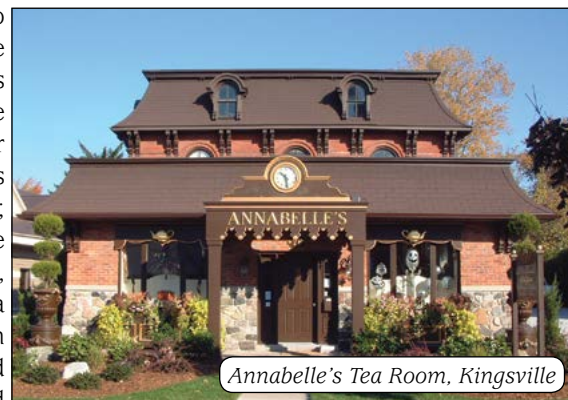
#### Stop #7: INSIDE OUT HOME DECOR

We'd seen this shop in the Daytripper and had to stop here before heading home. It's a gorgeous, two-storey house on the west edge of Kingsville that has been completely restored and is now a



gift shop throughout. It's so large that you'd think someone must live there, but it's all store and there are some really creative decorating ideas to be seen. Lisa had a field day. On the outside there's a massive wood carving that needs to be seen to be appreciated and I think more carvings may be planned.

The underlying theme of this trip is that we need to do it again. We want to take in more of that folk festival. We would go to the same (or any other) EPIC event in a heartbeat, and we didn't get near enough of an opportunity to explore Kingsville and area. We always talk on the way home about what we missed... what we would do the next time. On this trip I can't begin to tell you how many other things we wish we'd done. We definitely agreed that we would plan to stay overnight in the area on the Saturday and the Sunday for this



particular weekend, though we don't know where the Vintage Tasting is held from year to year.

*Publisher's note: Thanks for another great article! We need more like this. That's a hint for our readers! Randy's Antique shop is now called Farm Fresh Antiques and is between Kingsville and Harrow—you can't miss it. The Vintage Tasting will be on August 12th this year (2018) at Vivace Estate Winery in Amherstburg. We don't know what the C in EPIC stands for either!*

*Update: Inside Out Home Decor is now closed—that gives you more time for the wine tour!*