

Along the Canal: It's Not Over Yet

Vicky Daly

The common wisdom in our region is that summer begins with Memorial Day and ends much too soon with Labor Day. For families with school age children, the season is even shorter, beginning at the close of the school year in late June. Morning temperatures in the 40's enforce that belief, BUT there is still much to do and see and enjoy along the New York State canals right up to its official closing on November 15th. That is a full nine weeks from now as I write this at my kitchen table.

There is no question that a canal outing in the fall is a different experience than one in mid-summer, but it is no less pleasant and enjoyable. The festivals with their flea markets, craft shows, music and parades are largely over. Life is calmer in the canal villages. Shop owners and folks you meet at the local coffee shops have time to chat and share with the visitor the 'must see' spots and the stories about their community. Trust me, every village and town has its own people, places and stories that they believe make their home town special and unique. What is marvelous is that the local folks are right. Each of the 200+ villages, towns and cities within the Canal Corridor is really a one of a kind. No cookie cutters here. Whether you drive, boat, drive, cycle or hike the canal trail this fall, you will have the opportunity for a wonderful experience, be it a major outing or a Sunday afternoon ramble.

Road Scholar: Adventures in Lifelong Learning, www.roadscholar.org, may be just the thing for those among us who would prefer to leave the planning and the driving to someone else. After exploring the Canal Corridor, *Road Scholar's* planners created a 13 day tour: On the Road: Erie Canal. Monument of Progress that Shaped a Nation. This year's tour--new to the program--is already on the road, but check the website for details for the future.

Afterthought: Don't dismiss this as a possibility because you live and/or work in a canal community. Palmyra isn't Middleport, isn't Schuylerville, isn't Lockport or Camillus or Medina or Waterford or any one of the 200+ others. Your familiarity with the canal will make the visit to any of the others all the richer because of what you bring to it in knowledge and experience.

"These grants turn good ideas into reality." The grants referred to are those made available to successful applicants by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission. The words are those of Beth Sciumeca, soon to be former Executive Director of the organization which benefitted greatly from her leadership. To learn if your canal related project might be eligible, contact Andy Kitzman at [518-237-7000](tel:518-237-7000) ex. 201 or at Andy.Kitzman@partner.nps.gov. All applications must be in by Friday, October 25, 2013 so don't delay.

A new-to.me canal related organization that the boaters among us should know about is the **New York Boating Club**, www.nyboatingclub.com. Based in New York State and designed for New York State boaters and those who plan to boat our waterways, membership is free. Check it out. This may be your way to explore some of our 200+ canal communities.