



'I had to try it'

A non-camper is won over by the comfy accommodations and informative tours offered at Long Point Eco-Adventures

Melody Wren

I hadn't camped for years and to be honest, I'm more of a "room service" kind of person.

I was intrigued, however, by the notion of "glamping" — short for glamorous camping — where the sleeping is done in canvas structures that are more like a hotel room than tent.

Long Point Eco-Adventures, a private Norfolk County attraction near Long Point on Lake Erie, complements the "glamp-sites" by offering zip-lining, kayaking, moun-

tain biking and hiking, plus a tour of the night skies from its own observatory.

There's also a nearby winery for anyone seeking a complete spoil-yourself adventure package.

The inspiration for the business came to Mike McArthur and Dave Pond as they considered the stunning views on the property overlooking Lake Erie. McArthur remembers exploring the land as a young boy when part of it was still farmed by his grandfather.

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Visitors cross one of the "skybridges" that are part of the Zip-line & Canopy Tour at Long Point Eco-Adventures, a private attraction in Norfolk County.

LONG POINT ECO-ADVENTURES

JetLev lets you fly above the water

Wayne Parry

BERKELEY TOWNSHIP, N.J. — Jenna Lee didn't get as high as she wanted, and it wasn't for lack of trying. In fact, the 23-year-old Brick Township woman was perfectly sober as she tried to soar over the surface of Barnegat Bay.

She was using a JetLev, a mechanical contraption that lets users hover above and fly over the surface of the water. It's become one of this summer's must-do attractions at the Jersey shore for anyone with \$130 and a half-hour to kill.

"It was awesome!" Lee exclaimed after climbing back aboard the pontoon boat that carried her to the flight site in Ocean County.

Started in 2004 by Raymond Li, a Chinese-born Canadian, the JetLev went through years of testing and revision and hit the market a few months ago. The company, based in Dania Beach, Fla., says it has about 100 units in use at 20 U.S. centres. The Berkeley, N.J., rental facility charges \$130 for a half-hour flight, or \$75 for 15 minutes.

The device, with handles and two powerful jet nozzles, is connected by a long black hose to a boat that trails behind and forces water through the hose and out the nozzles, creating the lift that propels the wearer into the air.



WAYNE PARRY, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jenna Lee rises above the water of Barnegat Bay in New Jersey while using a JetLev propulsion device.

A supervisor on a nearby vessel controls the speed of the jets, and thus the height of the flyer. Users get instruction through a wireless microphone in the helmet they wear.

"As long as he's talking to you through the helmet, you'll get the feel of it," Lee said. "You definitely need to spend the first few minutes learning."

The Associated Press

Google Street View tours look at big California parks

The Associated Press

FRESNO, Calif. — Imagine being the only driver on a two-lane asphalt highway as the stark desolation of Death Valley National Park passes on each side. Or picture a tight left turn on Yosemite's Glacier Point Road where in the east the iconic Half Dome suddenly appears against a backdrop of the snow-capped High Sierra.

The Google Street View service has turned its 360-degree cameras on road trips through some U.S. national parks in California.

The company sought permission from the U.S. Department of the Interior before filming in May as drivers hit the road in vehicles rigged with 15-lens cameras that point in all directions. The camera fires off still images at intervals depending upon the speed of the

Online:

- Yosemite National Park: <http://bit.ly/OVcQ9M>
- Death Valley National Park: <http://bit.ly/PSx0FO>
- Redwood National Park: <http://bit.ly/MbNCJD>
- Joshua Tree National Park: <http://bit.ly/OjnAUp>

vehicle, then custom software blurs faces and stitches all of them together into an ever-advancing 360-degree panorama.

The parks join other Street View features like a snowy glide down one of the ski runs at Squaw Valley of 1960 Olympics fame, or a walk around the gardens of the Louvre museum in Paris.

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Kayaking tour follows Big Creek

► **Outdoors** continued from E10

The Eco-Adventures tents are permanent and spacious structures — each offering a king-size bed, electricity, solar lighting, a table and chairs, and a small fridge.

Most important for me was the fully outfitted bathroom with a separate shower that was open to the stars. Each tent also has a front deck and many of them offer a great view over the marshes of Turkey Point, with Long Point visible in the distance. Low berms separate the tents to help keep them private and deaden any noise.

For weeks leading up to my stay at Long Point Eco-Adventure, I schemed about how I would get out of zip lining, something I had never tried.

The Eco-Adventures Zip Line & Canopy Tour continues for more than two hours, incorporating eight separate zip lines and two suspension “skybridges.”

“I could never do that,” friends and acquaintances told me. And I wasn’t so sure that I could.

But as Mark Twain said: “If you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve always got.”

So I had to try it — for the naysayers and for myself. And strangely, I found my initial fears disappeared after the third zip and that I was actually disappointed when it was all over. I can’t wait to do it again.

On our first full morning at Long Point Eco-Adventures, following breakfast, we took the Big Creek Paddling Tour that’s offered through the resort.

Following instructions that had been sent ahead by our kayaking guides, Brian Craig and Paula Jongerden, we met our fellow participants at the side of the creek, about a 15-minute drive

west from our base.

Big Creek, which Craig refers to as Canada’s Amazon River, meanders gently under a canopy of trees, passing through the sandy plain at the south end of Norfolk County.

There was lots of natural deadfall in the water, providing some obstacles that helped keep the paddling interesting. There was lots to look at and we drifted gently along with the current. The comfortable pace meant we were able to chat with others in the group.

Craig was extremely knowledgeable, pointing out specific birds, plants and trees along the way. Even though we travelled a total of 12 kilometres, it was a perfect activity for a hot and humid afternoon.

A little past the half way point, we pulled over onto a sandbank and were treated to snacks — a refreshing fresh fruit salad made with local blueberries, plus homemade muffins, which were a nice personal touch.

After our break, some of us jumped into the icy-cold creek and floated along with the current.

After five hours, Craig and Jongerden ferried our weary, but happy bodies back to our cars.

That night, in the Long Point Eco-Adventures visitor centre, we took the Observatory Tour, offered every evening after dark.

As we waited for darkness, we were shown the constellations we were about to see with the help of a fascinating computer program (a free download) called Stellarium.

And then, with the help of the observatory’s big telescope, we looked above and saw the beautiful rings of Saturn, a globe cluster of some 300,000 stars and other features of astronomical interest, ending with two beautiful close-ups of the full moon.

We were then led to an outer



JEFF THOMASON

Melody Wren take notes while relaxing in front of her tent at Long Point Eco-Adventures in Norfolk County.

platform and a blue laser pointer was used to guide us through several constellations and their entertaining mythological history. By the time the tour ended, it was almost midnight.

While at Long Point Eco-Adventures, you can wander across the road to the Burning Kiln winery and enjoy a tasting, a tour, and even a gourmet meal.

It’s a modern winery that uses grapes grown on old tobacco lands. The venture is owned by seven partners, including the original tobacco farmer. The first harvest from the 27 acres was in 2010. The Burning Kiln offers dinner with a fixed-price menu at a very reasonable cost. The servings include both local and seasonal foods that are obviously chosen for their compatibility with the wines being served. The menu changes every four weeks.

Melody Wren is a Guelph writer. She was a guest of Long Point Eco-Adventures.

If you go . . .

Long Point Eco-Adventures (1-877-743-8687 or www.lpfun.ca) is at 1730 Front Rd., Turkey Point, Ont., on the north shore of Lake Erie, about a one hour drive from Waterloo Region and Guelph.

Accommodations: Tents are available for \$229 per night (double occupancy) through Sept. 2; \$179.99 per night from Sept. 3 through to November. For savings, check out the various adventure packages offered online.

Adventure tours: Zip-lining tours, kayak adventures, mountain biking and star gazing are extra. Tours can also be purchased separately without an overnight stay.

Burning Kiln Winery (1-519-586-9858 or www.burningkilnwinery.ca) is at 1709 Front Rd. Wine tastings are \$2, or \$5 for three tastes. Reservations are advised if you plan to stay for dinner.

Norfolk County is known as the vegetable garden of Ontario, so check out the local markets and farm stands. For online information about locations, visit www.Ontariosouthwestculinary.com.



GOH IROMOTO

Mountain bikers tour the grounds at Long Point Eco-Adventures near Turkey Point, Ont.

Highway across Canada ends in Tofino, villagers insist

Mike Fuhrmann

TOFINO, B.C. — The black-and-white sign in Tofino’s harbour is a pretty low-key affair, an arched orca adding a decorative flourish at the top, but there’s nothing modest about the statement it makes.

It’s literally at the end of the road — beyond it is the water’s edge, a wooden wharf and the green mountainous backdrop of Meares Island in Clayoquot Sound. That road stretches for 8,000 kilometres to St. John’s, N.L., at the other end.

The sign declares the spot on the west coast of Vancouver Island to be the “Pacific terminus” of the Trans-Canada Highway. Trouble is, it isn’t — at least, not officially.

As a Mile Zero sign emphatically states in Victoria at the southern point of the island, the highway ends — or starts, depending on your point of view — in the B.C. capital.

Tofino’s sign is “patently wrong,” says Calgary-based Mark Ruthenberg, who runs a Trans-Canada Highway website and has researched the cross-country network extensively.

“That’s a municipal designation, not a federal or provincial designation. It’s like a bakery saying ‘we’re the world’s best bakery.’ . . . It doesn’t really mean anything.”

Ruthenberg notes there is no Trans-Canada Highway signage on any of the roads leading up to Tofino, which has a winter population of about 2,000 and a summer crowd of considerably more.

Fifty years ago — on July 30, 1962 — the Trans-Canada Highway was formally opened at Rogers Pass in southeastern British Columbia after the federal government, under the Trans-Canada Highway

Act of 1949, had provided millions of dollars to the provinces to share construction costs. The project would later be finished in 1970 to become the largest national highway in the world.

Tofino first erected a sign declaring itself the western terminus of the yet-to-be built highway in the late 1930s or early ‘40s, says Ken Gibson, a former chamber of commerce member. Local boosters hoped it would stimulate tourism.

But the town was later “double-crossed” by government officials who had promised that it would get the terminus status, says Gibson, who has spent all his life in Tofino.

Asked why the sign has been left up all these years at the foot of First Street, the 77-year-old Gibson replies: “Because we’re just a stubborn, determined bunch.”

The original was made of wood; the current one is steel planted in concrete to deter vandals and thieves, who walked off with the sign several times.

Tofino’s mayor, Perry Schmunk, who’s also the general manager of Long Beach Lodge, says tourism groups in town have discussed giving the sign a promotional boost.

There are certainly no plans to take it down.

“No, definitely not,” Schmunk says.

The fact that there is an official terminus elsewhere on Vancouver Island seems to be irrelevant.

“One coffee shop has got a great slogan, and I think it sums up the town quite well,” says Schmunk. “It says ‘End of the road culture.’ It’s true. There’s a lot of fairly independent thinking out here.”

The Canadian Press



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