

# Welland Canal

NIAGARA'S



[niagarawellandcanal.com](http://niagarawellandcanal.com)



# The Greater Niagara Circle Route Trail System

The Greater Niagara Circle Route is over 140 kilometres of paved trails, suitable for walking, cycling and rollerblading. Bounded by Lake Ontario to the north, the Niagara River to the east, Lake Erie to the south and the Welland Canal to the west, you are seldom far from water. The tour links the following trails to create a circular route through the heart of Niagara.

## The Welland Canal Trail

This trail stretches along the Welland Canal from St. Catharines to Port Colborne, a distance of 42 km. Along the route you may see massive 26,000 tonne ships up to 226 metres in length as they glide smoothly past grassy banks on their way to climb (or descend) the Niagara Escarpment at a series of canal locks. The trail provides access to several viewing areas to watch the locks in action.

## The Friendship Trail

This old rail line has been converted to a multi-use recreational path connecting Port Colborne with Fort Erie. The 24 km path is straight and easy with virtually no elevation change. Along on the Friendship Trail there is easy access to many golden sand beaches on the shores of Lake Erie. The route parallels the lakeshore as it passes through farmland, villages, and quiet residential areas. With stunning views of the Buffalo skyline and a nature trail within easy hiking distance, the Friendship Trail offers options for enthusiasts of all sorts.

## Niagara River Recreational Trail

Constructed in 1986, the 56 km Niagara River Recreation Trail is a cyclist's dream. Following the scenic Niagara River, the trail extends from Historic Fort Erie through Niagara Falls, ending at Fort George in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Along the way, you're welcome to stop for wonderful attractions, historic sites, dining opportunities, Niagara Gorge walking trails and breathtaking views of the mighty Niagara Falls, making this trail one of the most exciting in the world.

## The Waterfront Trail

The Waterfront Trail begins in Niagara-on-the-Lake at Butler's Park and stretches 650km to the Québec border, with 900km of signed trail (visit [www.waterfronttrail.org](http://www.waterfronttrail.org) for more details). The 18km portion between St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake, including George Nicholson Trail, is the link that completes the Greater Niagara Circle Route.



## Something for Everyone!

If you complete the full tour, you will pass through bustling urban centres, welcoming towns and quaint villages. You'll enjoy waterfronts ideal for sightseeing, swimming, or simply taking a break from pedalling. And you'll experience the Niagara Escarpment with its Carolinian forests and its status as a United Nations Biosphere Reserve. Altogether, the Route takes you through seven of Niagara's 12 municipalities, and shares part of its path with the Trans Canada Trail.

If you come across an area that piques your interest, consider a side trip to explore even more of the richness of Niagara. Whatever is your pleasure, excitement, tranquility, discovery, or fine dining and fine wine, you'll find it all on your bike along the Greater Niagara Circle Route!

# NIAGARA'S WELLAND CANAL CORRIDOR



## EVOLUTION OF THE WELLAND CANAL

### First Welland Canal

Known As: *First Welland Canal*  
 Built: 1824-1833  
 Length: 28 miles  
 Number of Locks: 40 of oak timber  
 Length of Locks: 110'  
 Width of Locks: 22'  
 Depth of Locks: 8'

### Second Welland Canal

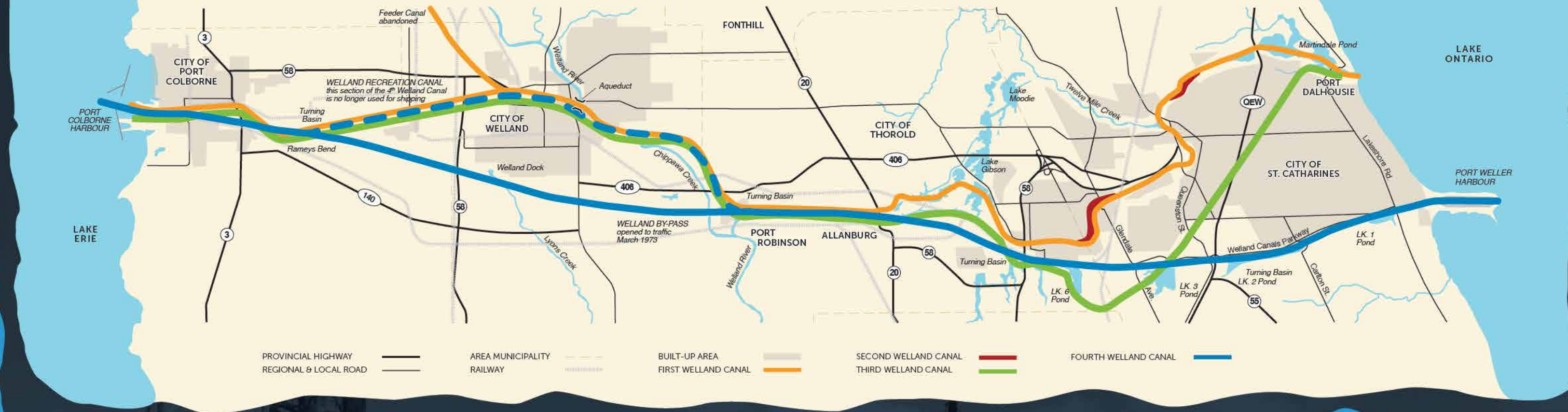
Known As: *Old Welland Canal*  
 Built: 1842-1853  
 Length: 28 miles  
 Number of Locks: 26 of masonry  
 Length of Locks: 150'  
 Width of Locks: 26.5'  
 Depth of Locks: 12'

### Third Welland Canal

Known As: *New Welland Canal*  
 Built: 1872-1887  
 Length: 23 miles  
 Number of Locks: 25 of masonry  
 Length of Locks: 270'  
 Width of Locks: 45'  
 Depth of Locks: 14'

### Fourth Welland Canal

Known As: *Welland Ship Canal*  
 Built: 1913-1932  
 Length: 27 miles  
 Number of Locks: 8 of concrete  
 Length of Locks: 859'  
 Width of Locks: 80'  
 Depth of Locks: 25.5'  
 Time to Fill One Lock: 12 minutes



# History of the Welland Canal

**1817** Construction begins on the Erie Canal from Albany to Buffalo, which would give New York City direct access to Lake Erie and the promising markets of the Midwest.

**1818** Merritt begins raising private funds for a survey of his proposed route.

**1823** William Hamilton Merritt, a mill owner in St. Catharines, first proposes a canal from Twelve Mile Creek to the Welland River, which would bypass Niagara Falls.

**1824** The Welland Canal Company is formed and George Keefer of Thorold is appointed its first president. Sod is turned for the canal on November 30 at Allanburg.

**1825** Construction begins on the Canal, dug by hand with only the assistance of horse-drawn carts. 39 locks are crafted of hand-hewn timbers.

**1828** Inadequate water supply and engineering difficulties forces construction of a Feeder Canal from Port Robinson to the Grand River.

**1829** The Welland Canal opened on November 30. The schooners *R.H. Broughton* and *Annie and Jane* reach Lake Erie in two days, pulled along by teams of workhorses.

**1833** Work is completed on an extension of canal from Welland to Port Colborne, adding an extra lock.

**1841** The Province of Upper Canada turns all loans made to the financially-troubled company into stock and takes control of Welland Canal Company.

**1842-1853** Second Welland Canal is constructed.

**1872-1887** Third Welland Canal is constructed.

**1913-1932** Fourth Welland Canal is constructed, with project stalled during First World War.

**1965-1973** By-pass of City of Welland is constructed.

**1974** 150th Anniversary of the commencement of construction of the First Welland Canal.

**PRESENT DAY** The Canal is operated by the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation.

**DID YOU know?** It takes 94.5 million litres of water to fill a lock. No pumps are needed, it's all done thanks to gravity.

**DID YOU know?** "SALTIES" Ocean-going ships that have curved hulls to withstand ocean conditions. With deeper drafts, they often only carry a partial load when sailing the Great Lakes. They make up approximately 20% of Canal Traffic.

**DID YOU know?** "LAKERS" Vertical-hull ships restricted to the Great Lakes. Because they avoid salt water, their lifespan is much longer than salties: up to 50 years or more. They make up approximately 65% of Canal Traffic.

**DID YOU know?** The Welland Canal closes in winter, usually between January and March depending on ice conditions. The Captain of the first ship through the canal each Spring is honoured at a Top Hat ceremony.

## Welland Canal Corridor

The Welland Canal Corridor is a scenic route through four cities from lake to lake.

Along the way, visitors enjoy viewing platforms, recreational trails and waterways, cycling routes, picnic areas, historical ruins, museums, displays, beaches, restaurants and accommodations.

The cities of St. Catharines, Thorold, Welland and Port Colborne offer vistas, activities, events and opportunities to entertain and fascinate every traveller.

The Corridor forms the western boundary of the Greater Niagara Circle Route Trails System (see separate panels).

## Passageway for the World

The five Great Lakes comprise the largest and most far-reaching inland waterway in the world.

From the Atlantic Ocean, ships can travel 2,000 kilometres (1,300 miles) inland to the edge of the Great Prairies.

The Welland Canal allows ships to bypass Niagara Falls and conquer the Niagara Escarpment in order to continue through the Great Lakes system.

It takes ships about 129 hours to sail from Duluth, Minnesota to the Atlantic Ocean, including 17 hours of lockage time throughout the Welland Canal and other St. Lawrence Seaway locks.

## Ships and Cargo

Ships are raised 100 metres (326 feet) by seven locks within 11 kilometres (7 miles).

3,272 ships – mainly lakers, salties, tugs and barges – navigated the Welland Canal in 2014.

Ships carried over 31,750,000 metric tonnes of cargo in 2014.

Common cargos are grain, iron ore, coal salt, stone, iron and steel.

Tolls for passage vary from \$19,000 to \$38,000 for a loaded cargo ship or barge, depending on gross tonnage, and cargo type and approximately \$1,500 for a small passenger ship.

Pleasure crafts are allowed passage for \$320 one way through all locks.

## Bridges and Tunnels

There are four "swing lift" bridges crossing the Canal – at Lakeshore Road, and Carlton Street in St. Catharines (Locks 1 and 2) and at Main Street and Mellanby Road in Port Colborne (Lock 8).

Swing lift bridges are lifted by a huge counterbalance that swings the bridge out of the way of passing ships.

There are three "vertical lift" bridges crossing the Canal – at Glendale Avenue in St. Catharines, Highway 20 in Allanburg and at Clarence Street in Port Colborne.

Vertical lift bridges involve weights suspended at either end, dropping to pull up the entire bridge 36.6 metres (120 feet)

Three tunnels pass under the Welland Canal – the Thorold Tunnel and the Main Street and Townline Tunnels in Welland.

# PORT COLBORNE

# WELLAND

# THOROLD

# ST. CATHARINES

Port Colborne and the Welland Canal share a closely entwined history with one another. Port Colborne was established as a settlement when the Welland Canal was extended from Port Robinson to Lake Erie in 1833. The presence of the canal through the middle of the community has shaped the local economy. To this day, some of Port Colborne's major businesses rely on the canal for cargo movement.

Port Colborne is the only location along the Welland Canal to follow the original canal route. Visitors can see remnants of earlier canals right next to modern ships or check out the Clarence Street Lift Bridge, one of three remaining lift bridges operating on the Welland Canal. View walls of the old guard locks from the second and third Welland Canals and abutments of a swing bridge that once crossed the canal.

The Port Promenade (along the side of the Welland Canal) is an excellent place to watch ships pass into Lake Erie, or visit Lock 8 Gateway Park to see ships from an elevated viewing platform as they pass through the southernmost lock on the Welland Canal and the second longest canal lock in the world! The Lock 8 Gateway Park also features a uniquely designed "Algoport" Skate and Bike Park which has been styled to resemble a freight ship.

William Merritt initially dug a ditch to provide a new water supply for his grist mill operation, which evolved to include a ship route. This channel was deep enough for boats travelling into the Welland River and on to Lake Erie via the Niagara River. The initial route was challenging to navigate and so a second route was planned and would diverge at Port Robinson. When tragedy struck as the banks caved in at Port Robinson, a third route was sought out. The Grand River solution was timely and a channel was dug that would feed the required level of water into the Canal. An aqueduct would be used to cross the Welland River which is still in evidence today. Lake Erie water was let in to the Welland Canal through the Feeder in November of 1829.

In 1833, an extension of the Canal from Welland to Port Colborne was completed. The schooner *Matilda* was the first ship to make its way through the centre of a shantytown (now known as Welland). The 1973 By-pass brought an end to 140 years of commercial shipping through our downtown and so began a new legacy. The flatwater is now a world known venue of excellence for regattas and home of the Dragon Boat Championships through 2024.

Whether you are cycling, walking or driving into Welland you will enjoy a nature walk on Merritt Island or a leisurely stroll of downtown as you stop to rest, eat and shop. Stay for the evening and enjoy seasonal concerts on the waterfront stage and the nightly lighting of Welland Bridge 13.

On November 30, 1824, approximately 200 people gathered near the Allanburg bridge in Thorold to witness the sod-turning for the construction of the Welland Canal. The fourth version of the canal provides you with an opportunity to watch the phenomenon of a ship climbing a mountain, just south of the place where it all began.

Vessels pass through Lock 7 and then sail north into the Twin Flight Locks (Locks 4, 5 and 6). This is the most complex part of the Welland Canal System and it is truly where the magic happens! This is where the ships climb the mountain because this set of locks function like giant steps in a large flight of stairs. The Twin Flight Locks either raise or lower a ship three times the height of a regular lock as this is where the Niagara Escarpment falls. The Twin Flight Locks also allow for two-way traffic so upbound and downbound ships can travel at the same time. The water levels always have to be correct so the vessels can traverse the escarpment smoothly. The height of the lift of the Flight Locks and Lock 7 combined is 57 metres or 187 feet. It truly is an engineering masterpiece!

Visit Thorold's Lock 7 Viewing Complex and Museum at 50 Chapel Street South, Thorold to watch ships as they sail over the Niagara Escarpment or climb the mountain. Listen to the roar of 23 million gallons of water pour into the lock and simply be amazed!

Stay in Thorold and experience a city that lives to the beat of its own rhythm – a little bluesy and a lot friendly. From fine boutiques to eateries, Thorold's historical downtown will surprise you with newly restored buildings adding quaint heritage flair to Front Street. Colourful new facades, renovated storefronts and bike-friendly amenities for visitors looking for a unique Old Town shopping experience will find the casual and friendly beat a welcome change.

A town initially formed because of its proximity to the convergence of Twelve Mile Creek and Dick's Creek, now dubbed the "Garden City," St. Catharines has a little something for everyone. St. Catharines was a nucleus for the creation of the Welland Canal, an engineering masterpiece that attracts visitors from around the world.

Visit Lock 3 to view the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre and the Ontario Lacrosse Hall of Fame. The elevated observation platform at Lock 3 is an ideal place to witness ships maneuvering the lock system. Explore the story of the City of St. Catharines in the Museum's exhibit galleries, including the Underground Railroad, the four Welland Canals, the First World War, the history of Canada's oldest sport – Lacrosse and much more.

Downtown St. Catharines is a vibrant hub showcasing an eclectic mix of boutiques, shops and restaurants with menus from around the world as well as Ontario's longest running farmer's market. The entertainment scene is rich with intimate live music venues, sporting events and concerts at the Meridian Centre and the new FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. Visit the quaint harbour side village of Port Dalhousie with two historical lighthouses, a beach, charming boutiques, restaurants, the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta, and a historic Looft Carousel! Summertime brings Canada Day celebrations, car shows, outdoor concerts, the annual Dragon Boat Festival and Ribfest in August. In the fall enjoy the Niagara Wine Festival, or hop over to Niagara's largest indoor shopping destination, the Pen Centre which encompasses one million square feet of shopping fun.

Whatever the season... It's all in St. Catharines!

**Port Colborne Visitor Information Centre**  
Humberstone Hall  
76 Main Street West  
Port Colborne, ON L3K 3V2  
905.834.5722 | 905.835.2900 | 1.888.PORT.FUN  
[www.portcolborne.ca](http://www.portcolborne.ca)

**City of Welland**  
60 East Main Street  
Welland, ON L3B 3X4  
905.735.1700  
[www.welland.ca](http://www.welland.ca)  
[www.downtownwelland.ca](http://www.downtownwelland.ca)

**City of Thorold**  
3540 Schmon Parkway  
P.O. Box 1044  
Thorold, ON L2V 4A7  
905.227.6613  
[www.thoroldtourism.com](http://www.thoroldtourism.com)

**City of St. Catharines**  
P.O. Box 3012  
50 Church St.  
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7C2  
905.984.8880 | 905.688.5601 ext. 1731 | 1.800.305.5134  
[www.tourismstcatharines.ca](http://www.tourismstcatharines.ca)

## TOP 5 THINGS TO DO IN EACH COMMUNITY

**SHOPPING**  
Check out the many unique shopping experiences that Port Colborne has to offer. Stroll... shop... and relax.

**PORT COLBORNE HISTORICAL & MARINE MUSEUM AND HERITAGE VILLAGE**  
Located at 280 King Street. Open daily from May to December. Free Admission. 905.834.7604

**WELLAND INTERNATIONAL FLATWATER CENTRE**  
Host to many international water championships, this facility hosts competitions, training and events.

**MERRITT ISLAND**  
Features a beautiful path perfect for cycling, jogging, hiking, rollerblading, and picnicking. Perfect for families, friends and the outdoor enthusiast.

**COME AND SEE WELLAND BRIDGE 13 LIT UP AT NIGHT**  
Check out Facebook and Twitter for special light shows and celebrations.  
[facebook.com/wellandbridge13](https://facebook.com/wellandbridge13)  
[twitter: @WellandBridge13](https://twitter.com/WellandBridge13)

**SEE THE SHIPS CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN**  
At the Thorold Tourism Office & Lock 7 Viewing Center and Museum. 50 Chapel St. Thorold [www.thoroldtourism.com](http://www.thoroldtourism.com)

**DOWNTOWN THOROLD**  
Experience the old town atmosphere of historic downtown [www.heritagethorold.com](http://www.heritagethorold.com) [www.thoroldbia.com](http://www.thoroldbia.com)

**CANAL BANK SHUFFLE**  
Take part in the rhythm of Thorold and enjoy our signature Blues event. The Canal Bank Shuffle Blues [www.canalbankshuffle.com](http://www.canalbankshuffle.com)

**WELLAND MUSEUM**  
Come and explore several historical displays and travelling exhibits throughout the year. [www.wellandmuseum.ca](http://www.wellandmuseum.ca)

**WELLAND DOWNTOWN BIA**  
Information on places to shop, eat, and play, contact WDBIA: [info@downtownwelland.ca](mailto:info@downtownwelland.ca) Let them welcome you to Welland!

**CYCLING**  
While cycling the Greater Niagara Circle Route, Thorold is the perfect place to stop or to ride the charming Port Robinson Ferry across the Welland Canal.

**WINE ROUTE**  
Niagara has earned an outstanding reputation for producing an array of exceptional wines and internationally acclaimed Icewine. Follow the Ontario Wine Route through downtown St. Catharines and Twenty Valley.

**PORT DALHOUSIE'S HISTORIC WATERFRONT**  
Take a stroll along the quaint streets to window shop, people watch and enjoy the refurbished historic buildings, galleries, boutiques, and casual/fine dining restaurants. An original antique Looft carousel in Lakeside Park offers rides at the nostalgic price of five cents.

**MORNINGSTAR MILL**  
History lovers can take a trip through time at Morningstar Mill, a 150-year-old operational grist mill that sits atop the Niagara Escarpment at Decew Falls.

**FIRSTONTARIO PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE**  
A 95,000 square foot academic and cultural complex comprised of four state-of-the-art performance venues. High quality and diversity ensures that there's something for everyone!

**LAKE ERIE**  
572 feet above sea level

**LAKE ONTARIO**  
246 feet above sea level

**EVENTS**  
Port Colborne's signature event is Canal Days each August long weekend. Other popular events are Flavours & Sportsfest.

**PUBLIC BEACHES**  
Nothing can beat a day at the Lake! Nickel Beach and Centennial-Cedar Bay Beach are open to the public.

**CYCLING**  
Discover the outdoors by exploring the numerous cycling trails throughout Port Colborne.

**ST. CATHARINES**  
To Toronto, To Port Dalhousie, To Niagara Falls and Buffalo, To Niagara-on-the-Lake

**THOROLD**  
To Port Colborne, To Niagara Falls and Buffalo

**WELLAND**  
To Port Colborne, To Niagara Falls and Buffalo

# LOCKS to see

The St. Catharines Museum & Welland Canals Centre at Lock 3 is the most popular place to view ships! Marvel at massive freighters as they manoeuvre through the locks. Explore the St. Catharines Museum and Ontario's Lacrosse Hall of Fame. Lock 3 is a perfect place to host birthday parties, special events, meetings, conferences and enjoy group tours. One of the best ship watching locations in Port Colborne is at Lock 8 Gateway Park that provides a beautiful landscaped viewing stand and fountain.



Also, visit Lock 7 Viewing Centre and Museum for a picturesque view of Flight Locks 4, 5, 6, and Lock 7.

Either by bicycle, car, or motor coach, you can coordinate your stop at our Lock 7 Viewing Centre & Museum with the Seaway Schedule so you can catch a vessel as it passes through the viewing platform.

**For more information, or to make a booking, contact us at:**

[museuminfo@stcatharines.ca](mailto:museuminfo@stcatharines.ca)  
or call 1.800.305.5134

Open daily year round. For hours visit:

 /stcatharinesmuseum  @StCMuseum

Call daily for ship schedules (Apr. - Dec.)

**St. Catharines Museum &  
Welland Canals Centre at Lock 3**  
1932 Welland Canals Parkway  
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7K6  
905.984.8880  
1.800.305.5134

**Lock 7 Viewing Complex**  
50 Chapel St. South  
Thorold, ON L2V 2C6  
905.680.9477  
1.888.680.9477

**Start your Niagara  
Canada trip planning at  
[visitniagaracanada.com](http://visitniagaracanada.com)**

Contact: Karen Doyle  
Tourism Marketing Officer  
**email:** [kdoyle@stcatharines.ca](mailto:kdoyle@stcatharines.ca)  
**phone:** 905.688.5601 x1733