

# Ride on

## The Ultimate Northern Ontario Road Trip makes a stop on Manitoulin

by Robin Burridge

MANITOULIN—"40 days, 40 nights, 8000 km. Best time ever," is the slogan for a touring route development project led by the city of Thunder Bay called The Ultimate Northern Ontario Road Trip.

Last Wednesday, the road trip ventured to Manitoulin where they tested routes and took in Island culture and flare.

Initiated under the Strategic Tourism Development and Marketing Partnership for Northern Ontario, the project is supported by the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (OTMPC), Industry Canada and FedNor, and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC).

The project's goal is to "develop motorcycle and RV touring routes in Northern Ontario and provide tourism industry organizations throughout Ontario with the tools that they need to develop and promote market-ready touring products."

Mike Jacobs and Peter Jacobs were selected as consultants in the development of the Northern



Manitoulin riders, along with Mike and Peter Jacobs from The Ultimate Northern Ontario Road Trip, pose for a photo during a rest at Bridal Veil Falls in Kagawong.

photos by Alexandra Sawicki



Riders take a curve on Highway 540 during the group's west end Island tour last week with The Ultimate Northern Ontario Road Trip.

Ontario routes. Mike Jacobs explained that he felt it was necessary that he and his father actually compete a road trip, testing out pilot routes, road conditions, accommodations, restaurants, and local attractions in order to properly create the tours.

The intent of the project is to eventually create an online virtual toolkit on the Ontario Tourism Motorcycle webpage, [gorideon-tario.com](http://gorideon-tario.com), for touring route devel-

opment and to also develop two fully market-ready Northern touring routes prior to the project's completion. The initial two pilot routes are the Lake Temiskaming Loop and the route from Thunder Bay to Sault St. Marie.

Throughout their journey, the pair and their crew are managing a website with an up-to-date schedule, a daily blog, and photos from the project's photographer and cinematographer, Alexandra Sawicki

([www.northernroadtrip.tumblr.com](http://www.northernroadtrip.tumblr.com)). The website has already been getting over 120 hits a day.

The road trip began in Toronto on June 13, with the Jacob duo travelling on their motorcycles and their crew (following them in a RV), to Kincardine. They ventured to Lion's Head and then on to Tobermory the following day. On June 15, the group took the Chi-Cheemaun to Manitoulin and rode to Mindemoya.

The crew met up in Mindemoya

with Colin Wilson, the economic development officer for Central Manitoulin, an avid motorcyclist, and the group's Manitoulin liaison/guide. Mr. Wilson organized a route highlighting the central and west side of the Island.

"This project is an excellent medium to document and promote 'biker' friendly businesses," said Mr. Wilson. "The Municipality of Central Manitoulin realizes the significant economic benefits that these travelers provide, and we hope that projects such as this and Ride Manitoulin will solidify the Island as a Premier riding destination."

Along with Mike and Peter Jacobs, Ms. Sawicki joined the ride to photograph the western Island tour and managed the pair's helmet cameras. Over 12 Island motorcyclists came out to welcome the group and ride with them on their Manitoulin tour. This reporter hitched a ride to get a first hand look at the group's Island experience.

"Manitoulin is unique when

compared to the rest of Ontario," explained Mike Jacobs. "It is very community oriented as is clearly demonstrated today by all the riders who came out to join in the ride."

The group embarked at 1 pm in a long, loud procession, travelling along Highway 551 to M'Chigeeng, then down Highway 540 to Kagawong. Nano Debassige, of the Weenguishk Film Institute, followed the group in a truck, taking both video still shots of the group along the way. In Kagawong, Mike Jacobs was eager to check out Bridal Veil Falls, where the crew and group posed for a photo. The next stop was Manitoulin Chocolate Works, where people grabbed an afternoon treat.

Mike Jacobs commented that he was really enjoying the tour so far and that there was a good possibility that a Manitoulin route could be one of the next pilot rides to be developed.

"There is a new kind of rider emerging from the old stereotype," said Mr. Jacobs, "and this new rider wants to travel to communities like Manitoulin that are welcoming to motorcycle and RV tourism."

From Kagawong, the procession ventured to the bluffs in Gore Bay via Highway 540 and 542 before travelling through downtown Gore Bay and looping around at the harbour.

The final lap of the tour took the group out to Meldrum Bay, where the entire party had been invited for a late lunch at the Meldrum Bay Inn.

"Manitoulin really has so much to offer," said Mr. Jacobs during lunch.

The entire crew seemed to greatly enjoy the wonderful meal and scenic view from the porch at the Inn before travelling back to Mindemoya.

Mr. Jacobs said that they would be exploring the other side of the Island on Thursday, when they travelled to Sheguiandah and Little Current before traveling to North Bay on Friday.

The crew joked that "so far so good for their third day," while Ms. Sawicki commented, "only 37 more days to go!"