

# Paris Two Rivers Loop

## OVERVIEW

**P**aris, Ontario, is situated at the confluence of the Nith and the Grand Rivers. Attracted by having 2 rivers to generate power, the town's founder, Hiram Capron, arrived here from Vermont in 1829. The town's name is derived from the large gypsum deposits nearby that were mined to make plaster of Paris. And lest you think this means it was not named for the City of Light, guess again. Plaster of Paris was so-named because of the huge gypsum deposits in Paris's Montmartre hill.

With its old-world charm, it's not surprising that Paris has been called the "prettiest little town in Canada." What this moniker doesn't describe are the great recreational adventures on offer. So, on my first real visit, I decided to enjoy the full Paris experience. I stayed in the historical Arlington Hotel and hiked the local trails. I paddled the Grand River and sipped a coffee on a balcony overlooking its waters. I played Scrabble in the Library Bar, and dined in several excellent restaurants. I toured The Paris Wincey Mills, visited downtown shops and accompanied Russell from County of Brant Tourism on a personalized tour. After all of this, I am a convert, so I encourage you to enjoy Paris's hiking as well as its après-hiking.

**Blue Dog Coffee Roasters**  
in Paris & Brantford: Coffee from freshly roasted beans, delicious food & more for your après-hike.  
([bluedogcoffeeroasters.com](http://bluedogcoffeeroasters.com))



## Insider Info

### LENGTH

8.5 kilometres

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Easy



### LENGTH OF TIME

2.5 to 3.5 hours

**% ON ROAD** 60%

### HIGHLIGHTS

Nith River, Grand River, Penman's Dam, downtown Paris shops and restaurants, great views

### PLACES TO EAT/DRINK

In Paris: Blue Dog Coffee Roasters (closed Sunday), Carvalho Coffee Roasters Café, Jade's of Paris, Paris Surf (Café & Pizzeria), Stillwaters Plate & Pour, Arlington Hotel, Cobblestone Public House, The Paris Wincey Mills (closed Sunday)

### ENTRANCE FEE

n/a

### TRAILHEAD

N43° 11.499'W80° 23.199'



## Directions

1. Park in the municipal lot beside the Paris Winncy Mills on Mechanic St. The Paris Winncy Mills is an old woolen mill dating back to 1889. Today, it houses a year-round market with vendors, a café and a test kitchen.
2. Head out to the road, and turn left onto Mechanic St.
3. At the end of Mechanic St., pick up a trail that weaves through a small garden and continues over a bridge that spans the Nith River. Smaller than the Grand River, it winds its way through rural Ontario from its headwaters in Wellesley Township until it empties into the Grand in Paris. Normally a peaceful stream, it becomes a roaring river in spring, with Class III rapids that attract many adventurous paddlers.
4. On the other side of the bridge, you arrive at Lions Park. Follow the trail with railings down into the park, then stay right on a paved path past some nifty park workout equipment. We stopped and had some fun trying it out.
5. Follow the path upstream, past some playgrounds and baseball diamonds until it becomes a dirt trail and crosses a grassy area with soaring trees.
6. Continue as the trail enters a forest and you arrive at a trail intersection. Turn right to cross back over the river. This is Penman's Pass.
7. Immediately on the other side of the river, there is a Y-intersection where you will veer left. But first, detour to the right down to a small bridge.

From this bridge you can see remnants of the old Penman's Mill. DO NOT cross this small bridge; turn around and go back to the last intersection. This time, take the trail option that was the left fork of the Y-intersection.

8. Climb the stairs up to a parking lot and a road.
9. At the road, turn right and then stay right at the Y-intersection to follow W River St. You get a closer look at Penman's Mill. John Penman built it in 1874.



*Penman's Mill has been converted into riverside condos.* Photo by Matt Carnwell





*Include a visit to the market and café in The Paris Wincey Mills.*

If you're old enough to remember the Penman brand, you may guess what this mill produced. Several people in Paris believe that John Penman invented long underwear, hence the moniker "long johns." However, information conflicts about the true origin of this term. More recently, the mill has been converted into condos.

***Note: Not all of the streets in downtown Paris mentioned below are labelled on the map; follow these directions carefully.***

10. Continue on W River St., then turn left onto Charlotte St. Pass the intersection with Broadway St. W and the triangular Kings Ward Park, then turn left onto Broadway St. E.
11. Broadway St. E becomes Helen St. as it curves left and then becomes John Ave., which curves right. Follow it and cross a bridge over railway tracks.
12. On the other side of the bridge, turn right onto Banfield St.
13. On the corner of Baird St. and Banfield St., is the impressive Whitlaw House, circa 1868, one of Paris's largest residences. On your right is the grandest funeral home I have ever seen.
14. Cross Grand River St. N, and directly ahead of you is Penmarvian. Penmarvian was originally a modest house built by Paris founder, Hiram Capron, in 1845. Later, John Penman purchased and remodelled it into the Victorian mansion you see before you. Currently, Penmarvian is a retirement home.



15. Turn right onto Grand River St. N and continue under the railway tracks.
16. On your right, you pass the Paris Presbyterian Church. This striking, red building dates back to 1893. Funding for its construction came largely from donations by John Penman. These days when you pass by the church, you may smell something delicious as it is one of the locations for The Raw Carrot, a social enterprise that hires people on the Ontario Disability Support Program and makes, packages and sells gourmet soups. You can drop in and buy soup if you pass by when it's open ([www.therawcarrot.com](http://www.therawcarrot.com)).
17. Continue along Grand River St. N as it descends into downtown Paris.
18. At William St., you'll see the Arlington Hotel. Built in the 1850s, this landmark building has operated as a hotel off and on ever since. Currently it's on, and you can stay in one of its literary-themed rooms. We stayed in the Mary Shelley room. You can also frequent the Library Bar or the Woolf and Wilde restaurant.
19. Kitty-corner to the Arlington is the Dominion Telegraph building. In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell received the first long-distance telephone call at this site, which was then Robert White's shoe store.
20. Unless you want to do some shopping or grab a bite to eat, turn left onto William St. and cross over the Grand River. There are some lovely shops, restaurants and cafés along Grand River St. though, so you may want to give in to temptation.
21. Immediately on the far side of the bridge, turn left onto a riverside trail.
22. Follow this trail along the Grand River up to Penman's Dam, where you'll be treated to an iconic Paris view. Built in 1918, the dam powered the town's mills. The railway bridge, which crosses above the dam, was built *circa* 1860 and is still in use today.
23. Before you reach the railway bridge, head out to the road, which is Willow St. Cross Willow St. and turn onto Walnut St. (not Walnut Lane) where you veer left at the fork. Unmarked at the intersection, this is Portland Rd. and it takes you to the SC Johnson Tr.
24. When you reach the SC Johnson Tr., cross it and continue on the small roadway as it takes you to the St. James Anglican Cemetery, which is worth a visit. Paris founder, Hiram Capron, is buried here.
25. Retrace your steps to the SC Johnson Tr. and turn left onto it. DO NOT go under the railway bridge.
26. Follow the SC Johnson Tr. as it passes through a few industrial sites, but also affords lovely views of Paris from above.





*The Penmarvian is now an elegant retirement home.* Photo by Matt Carnwell

27. In about 1k, the trail arrives at Curtis Ave. N. Turn right here and follow this road to Dundas St.
28. Turn right onto busy Dundas St. W. Cross the over the river, and on the other side, head down the stairs on your right to arrive at Grand River St. S.
29. Turn left onto Grand River St. S and you are approaching Paris's "Upper Town," which was the original downtown.
30. Turn left onto Burwell St. You immediately see 2 examples of the cobblestone buildings that are distinctive to Paris: St. James Anglican Church and Dr. Sowden House and Dispensary. Paris has 13 cobblestone buildings, thanks to stonemason Levi Boughton, who introduced the building technique when he arrived in the town in 1838.
31. Turn right onto Church St. and pass by the Gothic revival Old Town Hall.
32. At what is a confusing intersection, take a slight right onto King Edward St. and continue along its right side for some great views of Paris from a new perspective.
33. When you arrive at the Paris Cemetery, turn right onto Dundas St. W and then quickly right again onto Laurel St.
34. Laurel St. will take you to Lions Park once again. Turn right to enter the park and make your way across it to the bridge over the Nith River. Cross the bridge and continue along Mechanic St. to The Paris Wincey Mills and your car.

