

North Hastings a 'world-class' snowmobiling destination, say riders



By Nate Smelle

When the temperature dips to 26 degrees below freezing, many of us head indoors to nestle up by the fire. This isn't the case for Mike Bulas and his friends though. Every year once the snow has settled, Bulas and his friends hook up their trailers and head north from Hamilton to Bancroft. Thanks to the near perfect trail conditions on the weekend, Bulas and his friends decided to extend their annual trip from the usual extended weekend to a full week.

'The weather has been so nice and the trails so perfect we had to stay,' said Bulas.

'We have been up here for three nights now and none of us are ready to go home,' he said.

Riding from their cottage in Denbigh to Bancroft on the morning of Saturday, Feb. 28, Bulas and his crew stopped for lunch at the Granite. Over the years the restaurant has become part of the friends' annual ritual.

'This place [the Granite Restaurant] is perfect for riders,' he added.

'It's practically right on the trail and the food is fantastic. We have a few favourite places to eat when we come up here. The Hideaway in Coe Hill is another one of our favourites.'

The group's destination for lunch might stay the same, however, with more than 43,000 kilometers of trails to explore in the OFSC's trail system, Bulas said the trip is a little different every year. Later that day the group planned to ride up towards Maynooth.

'It's incredible how much ground you can cover in a day,' said Bulas.

'We have a few favourite trails we like to ride, but we like to try different ones too. There is so much to see up here; it feels almost like we are visiting a new place every time we come back. It really is a world-class place to ride.'

According to Bulas it is the 'world-class' scenery that decorates the trailside that keeps them coming back to North Hastings to ride. Although he and his friends like to ride their snowmobiles in the rural areas near around Hamilton, Bulas describes the experience as 'missing something' in comparison to riding the trails in and around Bancroft.

?It's just not the same,? he said.

?Even though there are still some trees and some nice lookouts from the Niagara escarpment when you ride in Hamilton you can hear, smell and see the city almost everywhere you go. When you ride the trails here it actually feels like you are in the wilderness. We see wildlife every time we come here. Moose, deer, fox, wolves; two of our guys even saw a bull elk out near Lower Turriff Road last year. We don't have that kind of wildlife in Hamilton.?