

Niagara River Drifting Thompson Hole - Frenchman's Creek

Thompson Hole is just downstream from the Peace Bridge

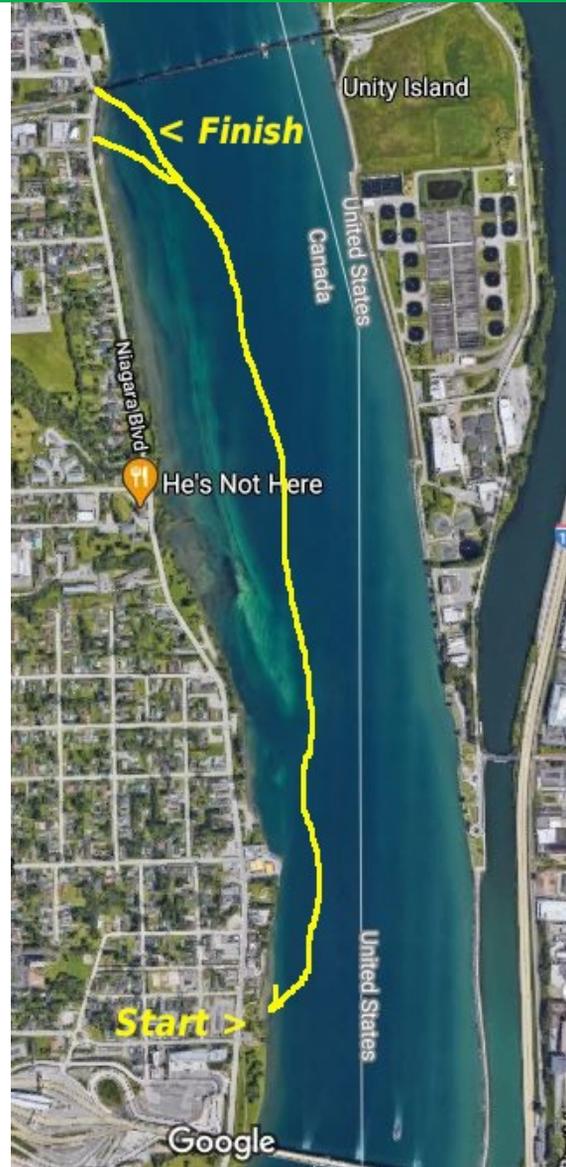
There is a parking lot at the base of Queen St at the Niagara Parkway where you start the dive. You also need a vehicle at the exit for after the dive.

There is a small beach that has a line of rocks extending about 30 feet into the river. Enter the water on the downstream side of the rocks, Have all gear on before moving into the current.

“Start the dive by fully deflating your BCD. Being a little negative is a good thing for this part of the dive because you need to get to the bottom fast.

On the bottom use a hand over hand method of pulling myself across the current towards the center of the river. As you pull along the bottom, count to about 40 using the old one steamboat two steamboat count. As you are pulling along, you will come to a small ledge and here it is important not to give up pulling because it's the second ledge that you are looking for. At the second ledge you can stop pulling and gain your composure. As you are drifting along, continue to move a little to the right.

From the start of the dive until you reach Thompson's Hole will take about 10 minutes if you drift without kicking. From the 40 ft to 65 ft depth the drop is quick. In the hole, you may come to an almost instant stop and you will be able to move around a little easier. The current will catch up with you and throw you out of the hole and back to a depth of about 35 ft. Do not resist and do not hold your breath. After that, the dive becomes just a normal drift. Confirm you are traveling north when you exit as some divers end up in an eddy traveling towards shore. If you stay in the current in the middle from the start to the finish of this dive will take about 45 minutes (it is quicker if you are on or near the US side and slower in the shallower Canadian side)



On surfacing, you should be very close to your exit point at the Fort Erie Clubhouse or under the international train bridge. You can see the train bridge from the surface to avoid going past it.

Hazards are some large rocks along the way and a large wooden platform with spikes sticking out of it at around 55 feet deep near the center of the hole. There is also heavy pleasure and fishing boat traffic in this area during the summer months so a “Diver Down” float should be used.

After exiting the hole, you may encounter large schools of Walleye, and Large and small mouth bass.

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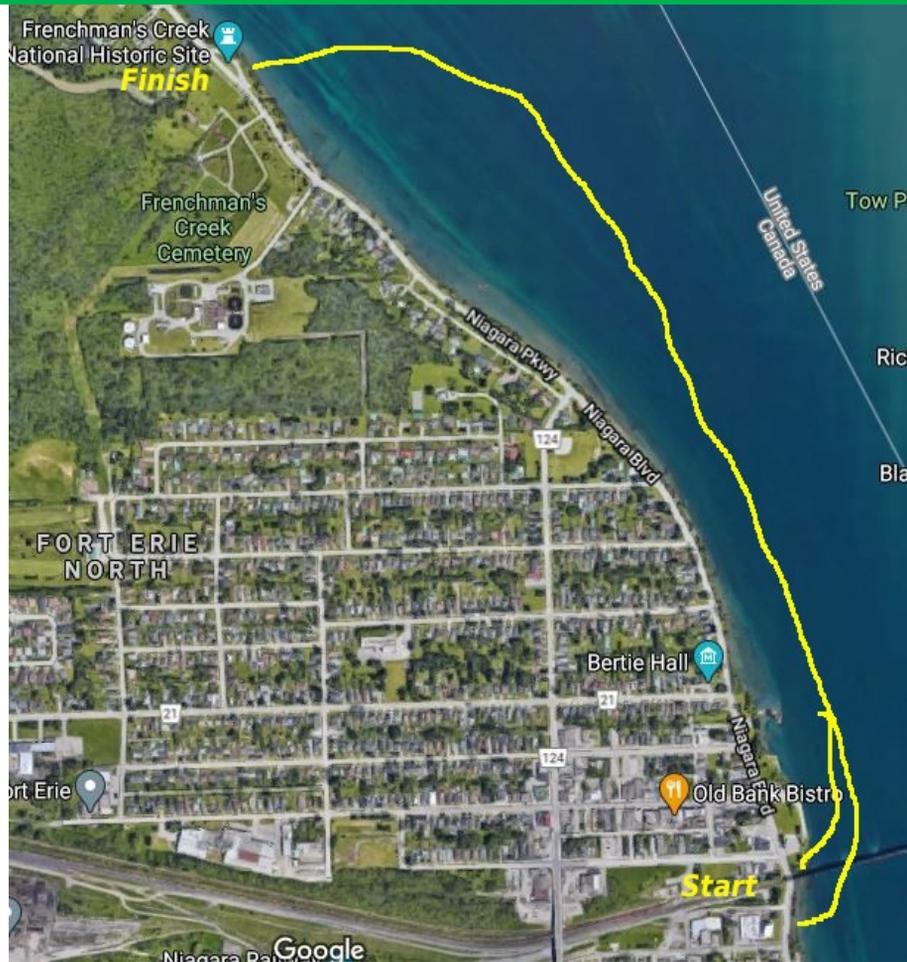
A dive that we never tire of is from the Fort Erie Clubhouse or train bridge to just south of Frenchman's Creek.

This is one of the easier drift dives to take, but because of the constantly changing forces of the current, it is never quite the same each time we take it.

To get started you must, of course, place sufficient return vehicles downstream at the exit point to transport divers and all their gear back to the bridge.

We advise divers to use a "Diver-Below" float

It is best to start the dive by working away underwater from shore while the current takes you drifting downstream.



From the Clubhouse swim out from the Clubhouse on the surface and then descend as you enter the flow and drift under the bridge.

From the bridge start negative and swim out in the current working to the right as you drift downstream.

The depth for this dive is only about 20-25 feet, and by establishing yourself just off the bottom, the adventure begins. Initially the river bottom is flat rock with very few places to grab hold if you want to stop and examine something. After about five minutes this changes to an irregular bottom with beds of Zebra mussels, beds of grass, and the occasional sizable rock.

At times during this dive you will undoubtedly see bottom hugging Gobies and Carp, lots of Bass, some Northern Pike and Muskies. Keep in mind that people have been losing items in this river for nearly 300 years so keep your eyes open.

After 45 minutes of drifting, it is time to make a left turn and start towards the Canadian shore. This turn usually takes place just after divers find themselves in a vast area of Zebra Mussels. The field is large and wide, and nearly pure white. About 20 feet out from the shore, you come to the drop off, and swim up. The drop off itself is heavily covered in soft silt. As you reach the top, the water depth is around 5 feet deep and, with luck, you should be somewhere near the boat ramp and the pick-up vehicles. If not, either walk to the boat ramp, or climb over the rocks at the shoreline and make your way over to the vehicles.