

Cheap thrills

Sail the little Hamiltonian to see the city from the water



LESLEY SIMPSON

What: A 50-minute boat tour aboard The Hamiltonian, a 12-passenger diesel-powered boat, will show you the city you thought you knew. See Hamilton from the water and readjust your lens.

Board the boat at the dock at the foot of Guise Street near Williams Coffee Pub. Captain Jim Shields (or the captain on duty) will point out The Royal Hamilton Yacht Club, the Leander Boat Club, Pier 4 Park, Bayfront Park, the Desjardins Canal, the Canada Marine Discovery Centre and the HMCS Haida.

Highlights: Create an aquatic adventure with your own captain. You don't need to worry about knowing sailors' knots or navigating nautical maps. Adjust sunglasses, listen to waves whoosh, feel the wind and watch the sailboats glide. If you like to take photographs, Shields recommends catching the sunset opportunities during evening tours.

What's great is the informality. Shields does not read from a prefab fact list, but talks like a regular guy, holding

the microphone, steering the ship, and sharing his own take on the place.

He calls the western edge our "green horseshoe" because of the greenness of the shore and curve of the landscape. He tells stories about flocks of cormorants on the water in the morning, and how that flock of birds creates shade under the water, luring fish into the cooler waters below the shadow.

"I stop the boat in the middle of the bay," says Shields. "I tell people to look," he says pointing to the expanse of shore where you can see the Royal Hamilton Yacht Club, Bayfront Park, Pier 4 Park and hundreds of boats, bobbing on the water. You can see people running, cycling, walking on the trail and guys fishing from rowboats.

"People who have lived in Hamilton their whole lives have never seen what the city looks like from the water. I've had people sitting in the boat with tears in their eyes."

At Bayfront Park, a family sitting on a bench waves. I wave back. They wave again. The Hamiltonian, like the Hamilton Waterfront Trolley, has that adorable cachet because it's small, accessible and open to the wind. This ain't The Love Boat.

Insider tip: Free parking at 47 Guise St. E.

Details: Adults \$11, students and seniors \$9, children 12 and under \$5.50. The boat runs hourly from noon until 7 p.m. until Sept. 10, and then weekends only from Sept. 11 to Oct. 9. (Weather permitting.)

The trip is about 50 to 60 minutes, depending on traffic. Sailors get right of way. Call Hamilton Harbour Tours 905-525-4498, or check out hamiltonharbourtours.com.

Expensive thrill: Hamilton Harbour Tours offers lunch, dinner and a Sunday brunch tour of the harbour aboard the Hamilton Harbour Queen, a 200-passenger boat with an enclosed dining area. Lunch \$35, dinner \$57, Sunday brunch \$41 per person. Wednesday night there's a special midweek dinner deal for \$47. Call 905-525-4498.

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Readers: Send your best frugal finds to cheapthrills@thespec.com. To see Lesley Simpson's video, check out thespec.com, where Simpson dons the captain's hat.

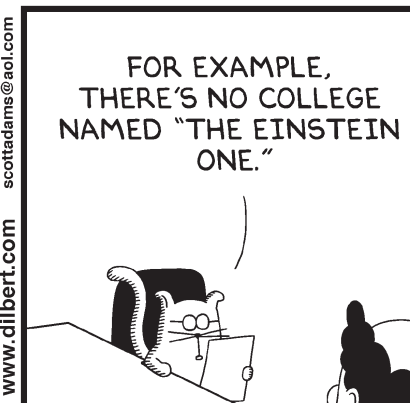


GARY YOKOYAMA, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Hamiltonian Captain Jim Shields delights in showing off the Hamilton waterfront.



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