

MANITOBA'S RED RIVER » CANADA'S NEWEST HERITAGE RIVER?



The Salisbury House Restaurant, known locally as Sals, offers diners a dramatic view of the Red River, considered 'a pretty good-natured river.' MICHELE PETERSON FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Going with the flow

The Red River is at the centre of Winnipeg's revitalization

BY MICHELE PETERSON WINNIPEG

As our water taxi pulled up to the dock in Winnipeg's Exchange District, a boy was hauling a channel catfish the size of my arm out of the murky shallows of the Red River. The muscular fish slid from the water seemingly half-asleep, its whiskers twitching as though it had just woken up from a nap in the sun.

Although the pastoral scene would have made a perfect summer postcard, the Red River isn't a place for Huck Finn types who dream of lazy days floating on a wooden raft. The Red is a waterway of epic proportions - its primordial power first acknowledged by the Cree, who called it Miscouipi, the Red Water River. The only major river on the Canadian Prairies that flows north, its quiet surface often explodes in a torrent of floodwaters that wreak havoc on the people and landscape around it.

Now, its importance is being recognized. At the Canadian Heritage River Conference in

Pack your bags

WHERE TO STAY

THE FAIRMONT WINNIPEG
2 Lombard Place: 1-800-257-7544;
www.fairmont.com/winnipeg .
B&B packages start at \$185, single or double.

BEST VIEW

THE ROYAL CROWN
83 Garry St.: 204-947-1990;
www.rcrown.mb.ca. Enjoy a panoramic view from the 30th and 31st floors in Winnipeg's only revolving restaurant and lounge.

BEST SCENIC TOUR

M.S. PADDLEWHEEL PRINCESS
204-944-8000; www.paddlewheelcruises.com. Offers afternoon sightseeing and evening dining and dance cruises.

BEST SHOPPING

THE FORKS MARKET
www.theforks.com. This is the

other. Almost every resident has tales of sandbagging, evacuation or rescue in their family history. In 1997's devastating Flood of the Century, the Red grew in width from a normal 180 metres to 30 kilometres, forcing more than 28,000 people from their homes.

Despite the spectre of annual flooding, the establishment of the Forks National Historic Site at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers in 1989 transformed the river's image. Today, its banks in downtown Winnipeg are the site of one of the most successful urban renewals in Canada. The revitalization of the area's railway yards created an urban oasis offering a mix of food, eclectic shopping and recreation. A fleet of comfortable water taxis ferries visitors to drop-off points along the waterfront, and new outdoor opportunities such as boating, fishing and ice skating abound.

"The Riverwalk and port finally allowed people to reconnect with the river at the water's edge," Palmer explains. "Today, the Forks is Manitoba's

DEALS

» BY PATRICK DINEEN

DEAL OF THE WEEK:

Kids play free Dominican Republic

Signature Vacations is promoting what it calls an affordable alternative to summer camp at the four-star Holiday Village Golden Beach in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. For travel from Toronto in July and August, children can stay, eat and play for free after paying a special airfare rate of \$399 plus applicable taxes. The Holiday Village provides supervised activities for kids aged 3 to 15, as well as day and evening nursery services for an extra charge. Activities include trapeze school, scavenger hunts, sea scooters, raft building, archery and optional swim or soccer schools with qualified instructors. Bookings must be made by June 15, with the package available for a maximum of two kids staying with two adults.

» For more information, visit www.signaturevacations.com.

Take the clubs or kids Florida

Once winter is over, prices drop at many top resorts in places such as Florida. For example, the Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club, which sits on the white-sand beaches of the Gulf of Mexico in southwest Florida, is offering summer rates that start at \$161 a night Sunday to Thursday and from \$183 Friday or Saturday through Sept. 30. These rates include complimentary green fees on the resort's championship course, two reserved beach chairs, unlimited tennis, access to the spa and fitness centre (with use of the exercise room, whirlpool, sauna and steam room), valet parking, afternoon tea and cookies at 4 p.m. and admission for children aged 5 to 12 in the morning activities of the Beach Klub 4 Kids.

» For more information or reservations, call 1-800-237-7600 or visit www.NaplesBeachHotel.com.

Father's Day tee time Ontario

The Talisman Resort and Conference Centre, 90 minutes