

Bananas and other oddities

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I like to have a variety of fruit in my diet.

Apples are good. So are pears, plums, apricots, kiwi, pineapple ? especially good.

I was at the local market the other day. Peaches, which are always good, were advertised as being Ontario-grown. \$4.99 per pound.

A few feet away in the banana department, bananas were listed as a 'product of Guatemala'. 89 cents per pound.

You can get almost six times the amount of bananas for the same price as the same weight of peaches.

Ontario peaches are grown in the Niagara Fruit Belt ? about two hours away by truck. The peaches are loaded on a truck and shipped to the Ontario Food Terminal and distributed.

Bananas are grown in the tropics, almost 3,500 kilometres away, probably put on a ship to cross the Gulf of Mexico (yes, Mexico, not America), loaded on trucks, and driven halfway across the continent to get here. And they are sold dirt cheap.

A fact check indicates that cheap farm labour, as well as the fact that bananas don't have a growing season and grow all year round, results in the low price to consumers.

There are a few other facts that I just don't believe. One being that grocers price bananas low, to draw people over so they will then buy other, more expensive nearby fruit.

I don't think many people who want to buy bananas will see a watermelon and have an impulse to buy one.

Guatemala may be a long way away, but consider distances here at home.

St. John's, Newfoundland, is closer to Europe than it is to the other side of the country.

As the crow flies, St. John's is 3,991 kilometres from Paris. In the opposite direction, St. John's is 5,005 kilometres from Vancouver.

That sure puts a new perspective on the phrase 'road trip.'

When it comes to road trips, Europeans are astounded when they tour North America and learn how big it really is. In Europe, you can drive through four countries in a day.

This past summer, I was planning a long road trip. I take road trips all the time, but they are usually only day trips.

I have always wanted to see the north shore of Lake Superior. I may have seen it when I was a kid and my family drove to Winnipeg to visit relatives, but I have no memory of it.

I decided on a road trip to Thunder Bay.

The farthest north I have driven is Sudbury. That's a great road trip if you like trees and granite.

Even though I'm pretty good at geography, I was stunned to find out that a drive to Thunder Bay would take almost 16 hours. For

some reason, I had it in my head that it would take about eight hours.

Even after all that driving, you still have almost a quarter of the province to get through to get to Manitoba.

I decided that four days of just driving, on a five-day vacation, just wouldn't be worth it ? at this time. I may try it again next summer.

A friend of mine had family visiting from Italy a few years ago. The visitors didn't want to be a bother to their hosts, so they said they would make their own way around to see different things.

One evening, my friend asked the relative what they had planned for the following day.

The relative casually said they were going to drive to Algonquin park for the afternoon as they heard it was a good place to visit.

My friend got out a map and showed them the route. The visitors were astonished to see that driving to Algonquin Park from Toronto was the same as driving around halfway up the boot of Italy.

They did finally see Algonquin, but only after they took a couple of days to plan the trip.

Another friend of mine had visitors from Europe. They expressed an interest in seeing the Rocky Mountains, as they had seen photos of the majestic peaks around Banff, Alberta.

My friend explained the situation and how far away they were, and offered to show them some nice hilly terrain in Ontario.

To put this in perspective, Ontario, with a land mass (excluding water) of 892,411 square kilometres, is larger than France, which covers an area of 632,705 square kilometres.

As for bananas, I wouldn't mind paying double the current price if it meant some farm worker in Guatemala would get a raise in pay.