

Ramble On

Because the Road Goes on Forever
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The Canadian Maritimes New Brunswick, Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island





We waited many years to do this trip. New Brunswick is a 2-day drive from most places even in the Northeast and certainly from our house. And the provinces are vast. So, we didn't want to have a week and only touch the wall before it was time to head back. For this trip we had about 3 weeks, and while far from seeing it all, we did hit some real highlights. I've captured them here hope that it helps with your own planning for this incredible destination.



New Brunswick

It's on your way north from Maine, so you may as well check it out, unless that is you elect to take the ferry from Bar Harbor to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. We liked New Brunswick right away. The people were enormously friendly. All the towns were named for Saints. The homes, yards and towns were incredibly tidy and orderly. The province borders the scenic Bay of Fundy and is home to Fundy National Park. Grand Manan Island is reported to be very beautiful as well, though we did not make it out there this trip.

Fundy National Park



Lovely park with the quaint town of Alma NB a minute outside of it. Not overly dramatic beauty, but a solid park in general.

Hiking:



1. Dickson Falls – very short and lovely boardwalk that follows a beautiful brook through its own microclimate of moss and forest. As such, it's also the Park's most popular, so try to hit it at the beginning or the end of the day.
2. Laverty Falls & Moosehorn – This can be done as 7km loop. Popular due to waterfalls and swimming holes, but worth it, especially if you want to swim on a hot day.
3. Foster Brook – For solitude, try this one. Very pretty and no one else on it the day we hiked it. Great skinny-dipping spot along the way.
4. Shiphaven – a boardwalk more than a hike, but some great Bay scenery and history.
5. Coastal paths – contrary to expectation, these were high on hardship and low on scenic rewards.

Prince Edward Island



This peaceful idyll nested in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is something out of a fairy tale. It must be the quaintest place in all of Canada. And the beaches are honestly hard to believe. When you look at a map, you would think cold, rugged, rocky way the hell up there. It's quite the opposite and some of the most agreeable beaches

North of Florida. Even though the Gulf used to regularly fill with ice in the winter (prior to Global Warming) it's so shallow that the water quickly warms in the summer months. The beaches are lined by grassy fields that then drop down to silky soft fine-sand beaches that stretch for miles and miles.



PEI National Park

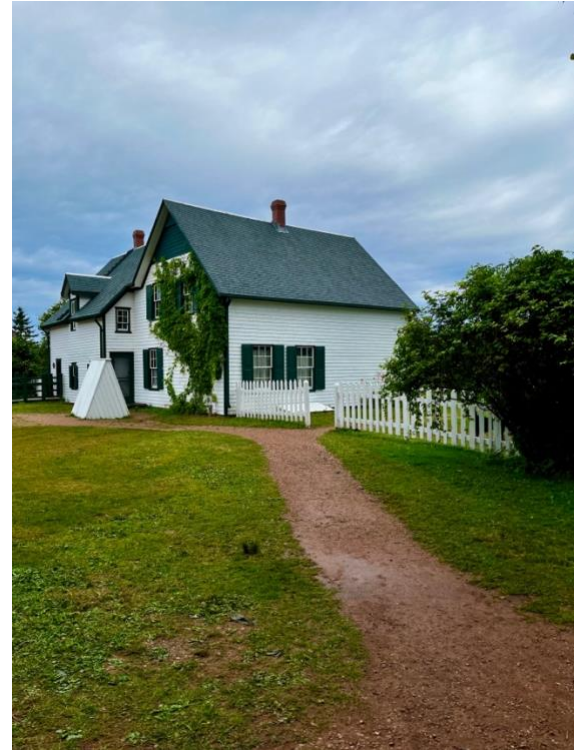
For bikers and beach goers, it's hard to beat this as a vacation spot. There are lovely campgrounds and cottages for rent up and down the coast. Bike paths run everywhere and there are so many great beaches and so few people you have a hard time deciding which one to swim at. For those who prefer au natural, there is a lovely nude beach at Blooming Point Beach just outside the park.

Fans of Anne of Green Gables will enjoy visiting the farmhouse where the book was inspired which is also inside the park boundaries.

There are many other parks and beaches all over the island. And they have the cutest little lighthouses too.

Camping:

There are two main sections to the park. We camped in the Stanhope campground which was very satisfactory and right next to a great beach. You can also stay over in Cavendish, where Green Gables is located, or just drive over there as we did. We had a 2-way hookup but only 15 Amp which wasn't enough for our trailer so really was just a 1-way.



Nova Scotia



Nova Scotia is big. We didn't get everywhere on our first foray. But here are the excellent places we did go.

Cape Breton Highlands National Park

Cape Breton is the peninsula at the north end of the province poking out into the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Atlantic. It was settled by Scots and still bears Gaelic names on the road signs. Up at the very northern tip of that is the National Park. It is a dramatic set of coastal headlands and highlands with one of the few remaining Acadian forests in North America.



The
star
of
the

show is the Cabot Trail which is the 187-mile loop road that hugs each coastline and connects them through the highlands. If you've seen scenic photos of Nova Scotia, then you've seen this highway.

Wildlife abounds. Moose are plentiful, thanks to their successful reintroduction after being hunted to extinction and a helpful Spruce Worm that killed off the Spruce tree population in the 1970s and allowed the Balsam trees to replace them. Balsam shoots are Moose's favorite food. It's like Moose crack. And there are whales. In the summer, the Gulf just off the Cape is a favorite feeding ground for Fin whales and Pilot whales. Sightings are very common, though try as we might, we did not see any on our visit.



The Atlantic Side of the Park is a wonderful contrast to the Gulf side. It has wonderful soft sand beaches in picturesque coves with shockingly few people on them, despite it being early August. Within the park is Keltic Lodge which is a touch of old-world luxury that also features a great hike out to the headlands from its parking lot. The restaurant inside is simple but worth a stop for lunch. If you are a golfer, be sure to book a tee time at the Cape Breton Highlands Links as it is one of the most scenic in all Atlantic Canada.

Hiking:

There are many lovely hiking paths off the Cabot Trail throughout the park.



Skyline Trail

There are 26 hiking trails in the park, and we nearly did all of them over eight days. Most are short enough that you can pack in two or more a day.

- Acadian – leaves right from Cheticamp campground and has terrific views for a reasonable loop
- Skyline – A great view loop but the most popular in the park so do it first thing in the morning.
- Bog – great quarter mile loop through some fascinating wetlands
- Middlehead – leaves from Keltic Lodge. Lovely headland, but crowded midday.
- Franey – tough climb but a fantastic view of the Ingonish region
- Warren Lake – Nice flat loop around a pretty lake. Can hit Broad Cove Mountain on the same outing with big views after a short hike.

Camping:

- On the Gulf side we camped at Cheticamp Campground (not to be confused with the town of Cheticamp). 3-way hookups and clean bathrooms, in addition to being fun to say. Two good hikes leave directly from the campground.
- On the Atlantic side we stayed at Broad Cove (3-way hookups) which is nicely spaced in between great beaches and hikes to the North and Ingonish to the South.

Halifax

Halifax is a great little town. We only spent a day there, but it was easy and fun.

Not far from Halifax is the famous Peggy's Cove, which is exactly as cute as it sounds. Unfortunately, when there are cruise ships in port at Halifax, they send them by the busload down to Peggy's Cove to get their photographs of "real Nova Scotia." So definitely go early, or late, in the day.



Peggy's Cove

Further down the shore are Chester, Mahone Bay, and Lunenburg. All are adorable, a bit less touristy than Peggy's Cove, and give you the chance to drive the lovely coastline if you have a car.



Lunenburg

Camping:

We stayed at Graves Island Provincial Park which offers a few good views of the Atlantic but fewer with each year as the trees grow up around the sites. 2-Way hookups.

Minas Basin

This is not only a beautiful coastline with many islands dotting the bay, fantastic geology, and red rock cliffs, but it's also the location of the biggest tides on the entire planet. And that is really something to see.



Five Islands Provincial Park

Camping:

We stayed at Five Islands Provincial Park (3-way hookup). I've been to hundreds of campgrounds in my life and never seen one with as many big view sites as Five Islands. Not all, but nearly all of the sites have expansive views of the Bay of Fundy as the tides fill and drain every six hours.

Hiking:

There are several nice hikes right out of the campground. But we spent most of our time on the beach at both low and high tide.



Low Tide in Minas Basin