

Cabot Trail



Exhilarating ocean highway of the Cabot Trail

Awe-inspiring in All Seasons



WELCOME TO ONE OF THE MOST beautiful scenic drives in the world. Named for famous explorer John Cabot, the Cabot Trail winds around the rocky splendour of Cape Breton's northern shore, ascending to the incredible plateaus of Cape Breton Highlands National Park. This magnificent highway is carved into the sides of mountains that rise high above the shimmering waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Lookoffs offer unforgettable vistas of Cape Breton's rugged coastline, where pods of whales can often be seen just offshore and bald eagles soar aloft on the ocean breezes.

Cape Breton Highlands National Park encompasses one of Canada's most exceptional wilderness areas. The highlands are a colourful tapestry of woodland, tundra and bogs, where wildlife is common and moose are often seen grazing in the quiet shallows of lakes and streams. The park has 25 trails ranging from 20-minute interpretive family walks to challenging hikes through stunning mountain and coastal landscapes. There is also a full range of visitor services, including award-winning camping and interpretive programs.

Cape Breton's most famous resident, Alexander Graham Bell, once said "I have traveled around the globe. I have seen the Canadian and American Rockies, the Andes, the Alps and the Highlands of Scotland, but for simple beauty,

Visitor Information Centres

Baddeck E15, 295-1911

Chéticamp B14, 224-2642

Little Narrows, 756-2413

Louisbourg E17, 733-2720

Margaree Forks D14, 248-2803

North Sydney D16, 794-7719

✉ Port Hastings F13, 625-4201

Port Hood E13, 787-2521

St. Peter's F14, 535-2185

Sydney E16, 539-9876

Most Visitor Information Centres are open mid-May to mid-October (subject to change). Call the above numbers or 1-800-565-0000.

✉ Provincial Visitor Information Centre

cbisland.com



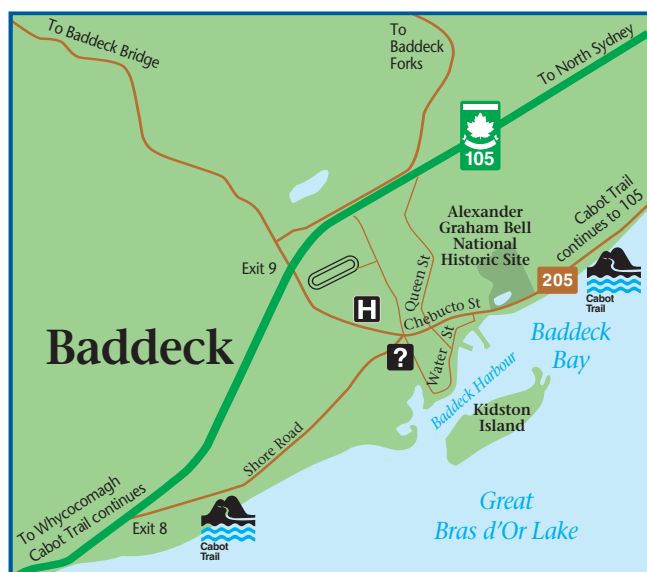
The Margaree Valley at its finest

Cape Breton outrivals them all." Bell fell in love with the region and built his beautiful estate, Beinn Bhreagh, on the shores of the Bras d'Or Lakes, where he lived and worked for the rest of his life.

The Cabot Trail is a destination for all seasons. In fall, the highlands explode in a vibrant palette of nature's fiery reds, oranges, crimsons and golds. The days are warm, the evenings sweater-cool and every road leads through a tapestry of brilliant autumn colours. In winter, the hills become a crystalline fairy-land. Seemingly endless groomed trails open the winter beauty of the highlands for cross-country skiers and snowmobilers, and Ski Cape Smokey's 300-m (1000-ft) vertical drop is Atlantic Canada's unique downhill ski experience.

The Cabot Trail is a golfer's paradise with exciting, world-class championship courses that surround players with the magnificent beauty of Cape Breton Highlands National Park or panoramic views of the Bras d'Or Lakes.

Cheticamp, on the western side of the island, is the centre of Acadian French heritage in the area, and the Acadian Museum there has fascinating displays highlighting the early Acadian history of the area. At St. Ann's, on the eastern side, North America's only Gaelic college features displays on the region's early Scottish settlers in the Great Hall of the Clans.



The Cabot Trail winds for nearly 300 km (185 mi.) through the beautiful highlands and plateaus of Cape Breton. A loop trail, visitors can begin or end their journey at a number of different points. This description of the Cabot Trail begins at Baddeck. Take Trans Canada Highway 105 west from Baddeck to Exit 7 to travel clockwise around the Cabot Trail, or east to Exit 11 at St. Ann's to travel counter-clockwise.

205 In a beautiful setting on the shores of the sparkling Bras d'Or Lakes, **Baddeck** is both picturesque and interesting. The diversity of accommodations, restaurants and activities makes it one of Canada's finest resort communities. Activities range from walking and hiking to guided sea kayaking or cycling tours and golf. For visitors wanting to get out on the water, several boat tours are available from the Baddeck area. Swimmers can enjoy the excellent supervised beach on Kidston Island, just offshore from the government wharf. A free shuttle boat service operates during July and August.

OFF TRAIL ► The Uisge Bahn Falls Park features picnic facilities and a hiking trail to the impressive 16-m (52-ft.) high Uisge Bahn Waterfall. Take the road to **Baddeck Forks**, and turn onto MacPhee's Cross Road; about 1 km (0.5 mi.) further turn left at the intersection.



From Baddeck, the Cabot Trail follows Highway 105 west to **Baddeck River**. A right turn at Exit 7 leads through the rolling hills and valleys of the Middle River area, a spectacular drive when fall foliage is at its best. **Hunter's Mountain** is at the centre of a vast network of snowmobile and cross-country ski trails that makes the region one of Nova Scotia's most popular winter playgrounds.

The picnic park at **Lake O'Law** features the often-photographed Three Sisters mountains.

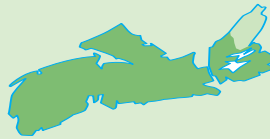
The Margaree River, designated as a Canadian Heritage River, is renowned as a destination for salmon and trout fishing, canoeing, and sighting eagles and osprey.

OFF TRAIL ► A right turn off the Cabot Trail follows a series of paved and well-maintained gravel roads through the picturesque Upper Margaree Valley. At **Big Intervale**, visitors can tour a working fish hatchery, and then at the interpretation centre learn how the streams of Cape Breton are stocked. Continue along the east side of the river through **East Margaree**, where you can visit a unique Acadian church and cemetery, and on to Belle Côte near Margaree Harbour, or return to the Cabot Trail.

OFF TRAIL ► At **North East Margaree**, the charming Margaree Salmon Museum presents the history of salmon fishing on the Margaree River (see p. 229). The Cabot Trail continues through the rolling green farmland of the south side of the river valley to **Margaree Forks** and on to Margaree Harbour.

Margaree Harbour is a colourful coastal village that wraps around a harbour filled with fishing boats and guarded by two lighthouses, presenting majestic views north and south along the rugged Cape Breton coastline. The village offers some services, beaches, canoe rentals and boat charters.

219 Route 219 to the left is the Ceilidh Trail; across the bridge to the right the Cabot Trail continues along the shore, passing



Marvel at the ingenuity to make things fly at the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site.



Don't Miss!

Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site

Look into the life and legacy of a genius.

Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts, St. Ann's

Immerse yourself in traditional Scottish dance, music, folklore and language at North America's only Gaelic College.

Cape Breton Highlands National Park

Strike out into 950 km² of the most spectacular camping and hiking in Cape Breton.

Birds and Wildlife

Let your spirits soar with the graceful flight of gannets and eagles; observe moose, hares, deer and foxes.

Celtic Colours

Be dazzled by the autumn colours while delighting in the music.

Whale Watching

Spot humpback, sei, minke, pilot and fin whales while boating off Cape Breton's rugged coastline.

Golf

Play fabulous courses with breath-taking vistas.





OUR SEACOAST, OUR SHORELINE

Cape Breton Highlands National Park

Close to one thousand square kilometres (366 sq. miles) of coastal headlands, highlands and heritage make up the Cape Breton Highlands National Park of Canada. One of the world's most spectacular drives, the Cabot Trail winds its way through this breathtakingly beautiful natural environment, filled with unforgettable scenery and abundant wildlife. The Park is open year-round and provides four full seasons of travel adventure for the whole family. Hikers and birdwatchers rave at the diversity of trails, while cyclists and runners return to challenge the hills and valleys in annual contests like the Cabot Trail Relay and the Hike the Highlands Festival. Kayakers delight in the beauty of the rugged coast and motorcyclists marvel at the curves, contours and endless colours of one of North America's most scenic drives. With the change of season, the Cape Breton Highlands welcomes cross-country skiers, campers and snowshoers who revel at the abundant snowfall in this winter wonderland. One of the finest examples of Canada's national park system, the Cape Breton Highlands National Park is a gem that brings people together from around the world to enjoy the best of Nova Scotia.

through the villages of **Belle Côte**, **Terre Noire**, **Cap Lemoine**, home to Joe's Scarecrow Village (see p. 229), and **St. Joseph du Moine**.

Cheticamp is a busy fishing village with a thriving Acadian culture. Visitors will often hear the lively sounds of Acadian French being spoken, and in the restaurants, visitors can sample typical Acadian food. The 18-hole golf course overlooking the harbour is a treat to walk and playable at every level.

Cheticamp is a centre for rug hooking and many other fine crafts, which can be seen in craft shops, galleries and museums. Some feature demonstrations of rug hooking and other local crafts. Les Trois Pignons displays artifacts and the fine hooked rugs and embroidery of internationally acclaimed artist Dr. Elizabeth Lefort and other noted local artists (see p. 229). The Acadian Museum, near St. Peter's Church, presents displays on the history of the early Acadian settlers (see p. 229).

The waters around the northern tip of Cape Breton Island are a summer feeding ground for minke, pilot and fin whales, and several whalewatching tours take visitors out for a close encounter with these gentle giants of the sea. Quai Mathieu, Cheticamp's attractive waterfront boardwalk, offers marine services.

OFF TRAIL ► Cheticamp Island's scenic roads and trails are popular with hikers and walkers as they follow the island's picturesque coast to a romantic lighthouse standing high above the island's sea-carved bluffs. The island can be reached via a road located near the south end of the village.

At the northern end of Cheticamp is the entrance to **Cape Breton Highlands National Park** (see p. 229).

Cape Breton Highlands is one of Canada's most stunning and diverse national parks, encompassing 950 km² (366 sq. mi.) of beautiful highland and coastal habitats. Park visitors can explore rocky shorelines, sandy beaches, mountain trails, old-growth forests, waterfalls and highland barrens carpeted in wild orchids and pitcher plants. Moose, eagles, and hares are often seen, as well as the occasional coyote, bear, deer, fox and bobcat.

Hikers can explore 25 trails that range from easy strolls to challenging hikes through the park's magnificent highland back country. Campers will find facilities ranging from unserviced sites to modern RV campgrounds. Golfers can tee off on one of Canada's most exciting championship courses, the legendary Highlands Links. There is a visitor centre at the entrance, with displays, slide shows, and a nature bookstore. A park admission fee is charged.

The Cabot Trail as it winds through the park is one of the most spectacular stretches of highway in North America. The trail enters the park and rises along the coastal mountains, offering several lookoffs where visitors can enjoy breathtaking views of the highlands and Gulf of St. Lawrence. Eagles can often be seen soaring on the updrafts that rise along the coast, and pods of whales are sometimes seen feeding just offshore.

The Cabot Trail continues, turning inland to cross French and Mackenzie mountains. Just past French Lake, the Bog Walk is an easy boardwalk interpretive trail that introduces visitors to the beauty and diversity of the Highland Barrens.

The Cabot Trail descends MacKenzie Mountain, presenting dramatic views north along the coast, and enters the working fishing village of



Traditional Acadian music is part of the everyday fabric of life in Cheticamp.



A whale of a tale at the Whale Interpretive Centre in Pleasant Bay.

Pleasant Bay, where visitors will find the fascinating Pleasant Bay Whale Interpretive Centre (see p. 229). The village also offers whale-watching boat tours, restaurants, shops and accommodations.

Just past Pleasant Bay, the Cabot Trail re-enters the national park. At MacIntosh Brook there is a campground with an easy woodland trail beside the brook leading to a small waterfall.

Leaving Pleasant Bay, the Cabot Trail climbs North Mountain. As the ascent begins, watch for signs for the Lone Shieling Trail. This easy 1-km (0.5-mi.) trail leads through a magnificent virgin forest of 300-year-old sugar maples to a replica of a Scottish crofter's hut.

The trail descends into the beautiful Aspy River Valley. Near the bottom, a right turn follows a narrow gravel road to Beulach Bahn Falls, which cascades like a liquid curtain of white lace 15 m (50 ft.) down into a clear flowing stream.

The Cabot Trail exits the park and continues through the Aspy Valley. **Cape North**, where 3 m (10 ft.) of snow in March is often the norm, is a cross-country skier's dream. The North Highlands Community Museum displays artifacts and photographs that highlight local history (see p. 229).

OFF TRAIL ▶ A left turn at Cape North will take visitors on an exploration of the stunning coastal landscapes and towering mountains of this most northern of Cape Breton peninsulas. The road descends to a low coastal plain, passing through the villages of **Aspy Bay** and **Sugar Loaf**. At **Cabot's Landing**, a provincial picnic park features a 1.6-km (1-mi.) red sand beach facing Aspy Bay. A cairn with a National Historic Site plaque features a bust of Italian explorer Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot), believed to have landed in this region in 1497.

The road continues into **Bay St. Lawrence**, an attractive seaside village tucked against the seaward-curving rocky bluffs of Cape North. Bay St. Lawrence is a popular destination for deep sea fishing and whalewatching, and several boat tours operate from the pier.

Leaving Bay St. Lawrence, a right turn leads to Meat Cove. This 14-km (9-mi.) unpaved road winds along the sides of the coastal mountains, offering panoramic views of the highlands rising above the pounding surf. The stunning vistas make it one of Nova Scotia's most unforgettable scenic roads.

At the end of the road, the tiny community of **Meat Cove** clings to the mountainside high above the rocky shore. This magnificently wild and remote setting is noted for its rare orchids, some of which can be found nowhere else in Nova Scotia. Whales are often seen swimming just offshore and eagles can frequently be spotted soaring above the coastal cliffs.

Returning to the Cabot Trail, turn left to continue.

OFF TRAIL ▶ A short distance past Cape North a left turn leads to **Dingwall**, a quaint fishing village on the shores of Aspy Bay, which features a sandy beach, a coastal resort, a museum, whale-watching cruises, and scuba diving. There are a number of shipwrecks off near-by St. Paul's Island for divers to explore.

The Cabot Trail continues inland along the edge of the park to Neil's Harbour.

OFF TRAIL ▶ Just past **South Harbour**, a left turn leads to a scenic coastal road to White Point and Neil's Harbour. One of the prettiest parts of this journey is the descent into the ruggedly picturesque fishing village of **White Point**, where a small harbour protects the colourful boats from the crashing surf of the open sea. From White Point, return to the coastal road and follow it to **Neil's Harbour**, a busy fishing community with a variety of shops and services.

Continuing on the Cabot Trail, a seaside picnic area at **Black Brook** overlooks a fine-sand swimming beach. Further along, at **Green Cove**, visitors can explore a unique shoreline of huge blocks of pink granite, worn smooth by the constantly pounding surf of the open sea. And just past the campground at **Broad Cove**, a right turn leads along a gravel road to a picnic area that overlooks the tumbling cascade of Mary Ann Falls.

The Cabot Trail exits the park and passes through **Ingonish**, a popular resort destination that annually attracts thousands of visitors who come to enjoy breathtaking scenery and outdoor recreational activities that include hiking, deep-sea fishing, whale watching, bicycling, sea kayaking and, in winter, skiing. Set along the coast with two large bays separated by the ruggedly beautiful Middle Head Peninsula, the area includes the communities of **Ingonish Centre**, **Ingonish Beach**, **South Ingonish Harbour** and **Ingonish Ferry**.

At **Ingonish Centre** the Cabot Trail re-enters the park. Here visitors will find the beautiful Keltic Lodge gracefully perched atop the rocky bluffs of the narrow peninsula that separates North and South Bays. The lodge features swimming, tennis, coastal hiking trails and the renowned Highlands Links Golf Course, one of the top golf courses in Canada.

Shortly thereafter a left turn leads to **Ingonish Beach**, a full-service community which has a long expanse of fine sand that offers both saltwater and freshwater swimming. The Freshwater Lake Trail is an easy 20-minute scenic walk.



There are several great scuba diving locations off the shores of Cape Breton.



Near the back of **Ingonish Harbour**, the Cabot Trail passes a popular ski resort where in summer and fall, visitors can ride the ski lift high up the coastal mountains to an elevation of over 300 m (1000 ft.). From the top, the view of Ingonish Harbour and the surrounding highlands is breathtaking in all seasons, especially when blanketed in fiery autumn colours.

The Cabot Trail continues, making the steep climb from Ingonish Harbour to the crest of Cape Smokey, a 365-m (1,200-ft.) high promontory often capped by the white mist that gives the mountain its name. At the top, Cape Smokey Provincial Park provides magnificent vistas of the mountainous coastline and the vast arc of blue sea. Visitors with binoculars can often spot pods of whales feeding in the waters just offshore. The park features several picnic areas and is the start of the popular Cape Smokey hiking trail, an 11-km (7-mi.) return trail that leads to a lookoff at the very tip of the Cape.

The Cabot Trail descends steeply from Cape Smokey until it reaches the coastal plain at **Wreck Cove** and passes through small communities along the North Shore such as **Skir Dhu** and **North Shore**. In this area there is a rich history of the Gaelic language and traditions, including milling frolics. **Indian Brook** offers shops and some services.

At **Barachois River Bridge**, the Cabot Trail turns inland. From **Tarbotvale** to St. Ann's, you can watch artisans at work in their studios in an area known locally as the Artisans' Loop. At **North River Bridge**, a right turn on Oregon Road leads to North River Provincial Park, a favourite with anglers who come to test their skill in the pools of the North River. A challenging 9-km (5.5 mi) footpath leads to North River Falls, the highest waterfall in Nova Scotia (30 m/100 ft). A Telemark ski hill is in **Goose Cove**.

At **St. Ann's**, the provincial park features a picnic area and a short walking trail that leads to a vantage point overlooking St. Ann's Harbour.



The Gaelic College helps preserve this unique culture.

The St. Ann's region was first settled by Highland Scots. The Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts at South Gut St. Ann's is the only one of its kind in North America. The College's museum features artifacts and displays that highlight the 200-year history of Scottish settlement in Cape Breton (see p. 229). The College also celebrates their Scottish heritage with several musical and cultural festivals during the summer months.

312 Straight ahead at Barrachois River Bridge, Route 312 offers an interesting coastal alternative route, the Old Cabot Trail, which leads to **Jersey Cove**, where a 24-hour ferry (\$5, STC) crosses St. Ann's Harbour to Englishtown. At **Englishtown**, the Giant MacAskill Museum displays photographs, artifacts and articles of clothing of Angus MacAskill, a 2.4-m (7 ft. 9 in.) giant who lived here in the 1800s (see p. 229). Boat tours to the Bird Islands are available at Englishtown. These islands, rising like rocky pillars from the sea, are the nesting grounds of thousands of seabirds, including

razorbills, kittiwakes, and over 300 pairs of Atlantic puffins. From Englishtown, Route 312 continues along the eastern side of St. Ann's Harbour to join Highway 105 at Exit 12, above **South Gut St. Ann's**.



205 The Cabot Trail joins Highway 105 at Exit 11. Turn right and continue to Exit 10, where a left turn follows Route 205 to Baddeck.



Highlands Links—Golf Magazine's 64th Best Course in the World and SCOREGolf's 2003 Golfers Choice Awards top ranking for Best Course.