

Exploring Cape Breton Island



Cape Breton fresh lobster

THE LARGEST ISLAND in Nova Scotia, Cape Breton has a wild beauty and grandeur that makes for some of the most impressive scenery in Canada. From the rolling highlands, sprinkled with sparkling streams, to fine sandy beaches, the island's 300-km (200-mile) Cabot Trail provides one of the most memorable tours in Canada. Other inviting country roads lead to the stunning Mabou Hills, surrounding Lake Ainslee, and to romantic little towns including Baddeck and the Acadian settlement of Cheticamp near the green Margaree Valley.



Lobster fishing boats in the Main à Dieu harbor on Cape Breton Island

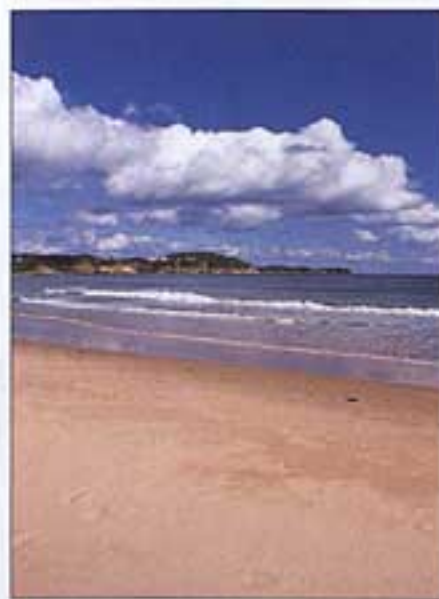
Cape Breton Highlands National Park

In the 1930s the Canadian Government set aside the 958 sq km (370 sq miles) of magnificent highlands in the northern tip of Cape Breton Island to form Cape Breton Highlands National Park. The park contains some of Canada's most famous scenery, with its mountains, green wilderness, and windswept coastal beauty. The best-known feature of the park is the spectacular 106-km (66-mile) section of the Cabot Trail highway, which traces much of the park's boundary in a loop from Cheticamp to Ingonish.

The Cabot Trail is the primary route through the park, and most attractions are found along it. Entering the park, the trail ascends along the flanks of the coastal mountains. Several viewpoints on this stretch present far-reaching views of the highlands rising from the sea. Continuing inland, the trail travels across the highland plateau. Just past French Lake, the short Bog Walk is a boardwalk trail

through marshes, with educational panels that describe this unique bog-bound ecosystem, which is home to rare orchids. Visitors may even catch a glimpse of the park's many moose grazing here in a wetland marsh.

Crossing the French and Mackenzie Mountains, the trail descends dramatically to the charming old community of Pleasant Bay. It then re-enters the highlands, crossing



Picturesque Ingonish Beach on Cape Breton Island

North Mountain, which, at 475 m (1,560 ft), is the highest point in the park. The trail descends into the Aspy River Valley, where a side road leads to the base of the 30-m (100-ft) high Beulach Ban Falls.

At Cape North, another side road leads to the scenic whale-watching destination of Bay St. Lawrence just outside the park and the stunningly pretty road to Meat Cove. Farther on, the Scenic Loop breaks away from the Cabot Trail and follows the coast, offering awesome views as it descends to White Point. This road rejoins the Cabot Trail to the east, where it reaches the resort town of Ingonish. The Highland Links Golf Course here is ranked among the top golf courses in Canada.

Cape Breton Highlands National Park

I Ingonish Beach. **C** (902) 285 2691. **☐** daily. **♿** **♿** limited.

Baddeck

Across the lake from the estate of Alexander Graham Bell, who loved the little town, Baddeck lies in rich farmland and is very much the island's premier resort destination. Set on the northwest side of Bras d'Or Lake, Baddeck is still the small, friendly town that charmed visitors in the 19th century. All amenities are within walking distance. The town's main street follows the waterfront and is lined with shops, cafés, and restaurants. Boat cruises around the lake are available from several places on Water Street by the shore.

The town's top attraction is the **Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site**. The museum here contains the world's largest collection of photographs, artifacts, and documents about the life of this famous humanitarian and inventor. There are early telephones and several of his later inventions, including a copy of his HD-4 Hydrofoil.

Baddeck

I Chebucto St. (902) 295 1911. **♿** **Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site** 559 Chebucto St. **C** (902) 295 2069. **☐** daily. **♿** **♿**



A fly-fisher tries his hand in the salmon- and trout-filled waters of the Margaree River

Margaree River Valley

Small and emerald green, the Margaree River Valley is in a delightful world of its own. The river has attracted salmon and trout anglers in large numbers since the mid-19th century. Today the region is also a favorite with hikers, antique-hunters, and sightseers.

In the little town of North-East Margaree, the tiny but elegant **Margaree Salmon Museum** will fascinate even non-anglers with its beautiful historic rods and reels.

Paved and gravel roads follow the Margaree River upstream to the scenic spot of Big Intervale, where the headwaters come tumbling out of the highlands. This area is ideal for a long hike, fishing, or cycling, and is dazzling when the hillsides are carpeted in the flaming colors of fall.

Margaree Valley

I Margaree Fork (902) 248 2803.

Margaree Salmon Museum

60 E. Big Intervale Rd. **C** (902) 248 2848. **☐** mid-Jun–mid-Oct: 9am–5pm daily. **♿** **♿** limited.

Cheticamp

This vibrant town is the largest Acadian community in Nova Scotia. Its beautiful Saint Pierre Church is visible from miles out at sea. The Acadians of Cape Breton are skilled craftspeople, and the town's seven cooperatives

produce pottery and hooked rugs. Cheticamp's best-known rug hooker was Elizabeth LeFort, whose large and intricate works depicting prominent moments in history have hung in the Vatican and in the White House. Several of her finest rugs are on display at the **Dr. Elizabeth LeFort Museum** at Les Trois Pignons.

Cheticamp is also a popular whale-watching destination; tours are available for seeing many varieties of whale.

Dr. Elizabeth LeFort Museum

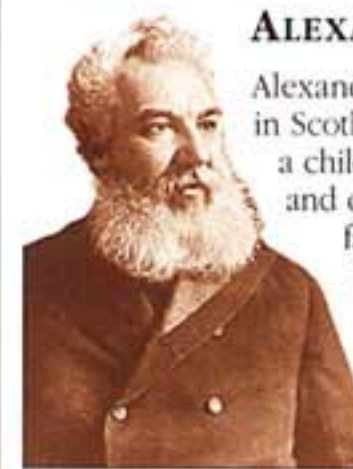
1584 Main St. **C** (902) 224 2642. **☐** May–Oct: daily. **♿**

Sydney

The only city on Cape Breton Island, Sydney is the third-largest town in Nova Scotia. Boasting the biggest steel plant in North America, the town is the region's industrial center. Despite this, Sydney has a small, attractive historic district around the Esplanade, with several restored buildings, such as Cossit House and Jost House, both dating from the 1870s. Downtown, boutiques, stores, and restaurants can be found along the town's main drag, Charlotte Street.

Sydney

I Sydney (902) 539 9876.



Alexander Graham Bell

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL

Alexander Graham Bell was born in 1847 in Scotland. Bell's mother was deaf, and, as a child, he became fascinated by speech and communication. In 1870, Bell and his family moved to Ontario (see p216).

His work involved transmitting the voice electronically, and he began experimenting with variations of the technology used by the telegraph. In 1876 he transmitted the world's first telephone message, "Watson, come here, I want you."

With the patenting of his invention, Bell secured his role as one of the men who changed the world. In 1877, Bell married Mabel Hubbard, one of his deaf students. In 1885, the couple visited Cape Breton, where Bell later built his beautiful estate, Beinn Bhreagh, by Bras d'Or Lake. There he lived and worked each summer until he died in 1922. In Baddeck, the Alexander Graham Bell Museum focuses on his life and varied work.