Cape Breton Highlands National Park

LOCATION
Cape Breton Highlands National Park is situated in the northern portion of Cape Breton Island. Lying between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, it follows part of a great table-land that rises to an altitude of over 1,700 feet above the surrounding sea. Set apart as a National Park in 1936, its 267 square miles of rugged natural landscape is reminiscent of the coastal areas of Scotland.

The detailed map in this folder has been prepared especially to assist visitors to readily identify the various features of the Park.

PURPOSE
Cape Breton Highlands National Park is one of Canada's 18 National Parks which form a chain of nature sanctuaries extending from Mount Revelstoke in British Columbia to Terra Nova in Newfoundland. These Parks have been established for the preservation of selected areas in their natural state for the benefit, education and enjoyment of present and future generations of Canadians.

This vast area of more than 29,000 square miles is administered by the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources.

NATURAL FEATURES

GEOL OGY
The surface of Cape Breton consists of a high upland with fringes of a much lower coastal plain in some places. The upland is a northeastward extension of an old land surface found in parts of New England, the Eastern Townships of Quebec, and the Maritimes to the West. The plateau of western Newfoundland is probably part of this same upland.

The highest point in the Park, and indeed in Nova Scotia, is about 7 miles west of Ingonish at an altitude of 1,747 feet. Most of the rest of the upland lies at maximum heights of 1,500 to 1,600 feet. Spectacular cliffs about 1,000 feet high are formed along the western shore where the plateau comes almost directly to the sea. The eastern side is more gently sloping, although a long east-facing scarp is formed along a great fault, or break in the earth's crust which extends along the valley of the North River and northward beyond it.

The plateau area has been deeply cut into by streams in fairly recent geological times. The Cheticamp River, for example, in the southwestern corner of the Park has cut a valley which is as much as a thousand feet below the plateau level. The Grande Anse River, in the northwestern corner of the Park, has cut a deep valley along which the main road climbs to the upper levels. The cutting of such valleys along the sides of the upland has produced the beautiful, steep but rounded hills which, with their forest cover, make the valley areas so beautiful.

The rock history of the Park extends back into the past for a billion years. Sedimentary materials such as sand, limy mud, and gravel collected on the bottom of an ancient sea and finally solidified to form solid rock. Some time later, masses of molten igneous material invaded and altered the ancient sediments while they themselves crystallized to form granite and other rocks. A long time after, perhaps 300 million years ago, there began another chapter of sedimentation of which we have record in the Park. This time sedimentary materials collected in shallow marine areas, estuaries and river deltas to form conglomerate, sandstone, and shale. A little later the sea changed and some-time parts of it were cut off and evaporated leaving behind redish beds with gypsum deposits.

Masses of granite were intruded during these periods of change and the sea changed back and forth. What is now Cape Breton stood stable for a very long time. Over the course of millions of years, rivers eroded the land until the whole area was reduced to a flat plain close to sea-level. In comparatively recent geological time the whole mass was uplifted and the low plain became a plateau. Rivers cut deep valleys into it and the sea washed its margins.

During the last million years the whole area was covered with a great icecap that covered all of northern North America in much the same way as ice now covers Antarctica. Soils were scraped away, great boulders torn away from the solid rock and left on the landscape, and masses of glacial debris and stranded boulders are to be seen everywhere, the streams are back eroding the land, and the complicated rocks which took a thousand million years to form are there for us to see.

PLANTLIFE
The seacoasts with their bold headlands, the numerous streams with their deep channels, and the treeless interior barrens give a large number of habitats in which many diverse communities of plants grow. The small ponds and lakes of freshwater and the indentations of seawater along the coasts add further to the diversification of the plant communities and the plants in them.

The Park is covered with a typical Acadian Forest made up of balsam fir, white spruce, black spruce, red spruce, white birch, yellow birch, sugar maple, white elm, beech, balsam poplar, aspen poplar, red oak, and a few other trees. The evergreen trees predominate at the higher elevations but in the high plateau, making up the central portion of the Park, much of the area is devoid of trees. This interior region is one of the most interesting parts of the Park but one not generally seen by its visitors. Here are unique areas of muskeg, small ponds and lakes, and the common murre and its young.
WILDLIFE

The Park is a wildlife sanctuary and all animals are protected against hunting or trapping. Many of the animals have become accustomed to man and may be observed at close range. They are still wild, however, and should be viewed and photographed with caution.

Mammals characteristic of the Park are: white-tailed deer, mouse, black bear, lynx, beaver, fox, bobcat, muskrat, weasel, marten, otter, mink, chipmunk, snowshoe hare, red squirrel and flying squirrel.

BIRDLIFE

About 180 kinds of birds have been recorded from the Park. It is a good observation area for seabirds. Soothing seaview, Leland's petrel and gannet are seen from time to time. The seacoast dwellers, such as the razorbill, black guillemot, gannet are seen from time to time. The seacoast seabirds. Sooty shearwater, Leach's petrel and flying squirrel.

FISH

The protection of the Park and the visitor is in the hands of the Wardens Service assisted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Chief Warden and five District Wardens are available at all times to assist and advise visitors.

SEASON

The Park is open throughout the year, but it is only from May to October that all facilities are available for visitors. During the winter months service stations and stores in the nearby villages are open and limited accommodation is available.

CAMPING

The various campgrounds and picnic areas are indicated on the accompanying map. There are American woodcock, common snipe, spotted sandpiper, and willet.

PETS

Dogs and cats may accompany visitors into the Park. For the protection of Park animals, however, dogs must be kept on leash.

HOW YOU CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PARK

Detailed information about the Park is available at the Park Information Centre located at the eastern entrance at Ingonish and western entrance at Cheticamp, or from any of the Park Wardens. Two self-guiding, well marked nature trails have been established near the Park Office and more are under development.

HOW TO SEE THE INTERESTING FEATURES

The most interesting features may be seen conveniently from the Cabot Trail. The regulations can be obtained at the Park Information Centre or from any Park Warden.
HOW TO REACH THE PARK

Most visitors motor to Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Cape Breton is an Island joined to mainland Nova Scotia by the Canso Causeway located on the Trans-Canada Highway at Port Hawkesbury. From this point Highway 19 leads north to intersect with the Cabot Trail at Margaree Forks. From Margaree Forks the Cabot Trail leads north to the western park entrance near Cheticamp and continues around the Park to Ingonish. From Port Hawkesbury Highway 5 leads to Baddeck and onto the Cabot Trail to Ingonish. The Canadian National Railways and Trans-Canada Air Lines provide service to Sydney. During the summer there is good bus service from Sydney to the Park, and on Tuesdays and Fridays the M.S. Aspey leaves Sydney for Ingonish and can carry a small number of passengers. The return trips are made on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PARK

The Park derives its name primarily because of its location, but also because the terrain is similar to the highlands of Scotland. Many of the original settlers on the Island came from Scotland and their descendants maintain ties with the homeland, even to the extent of having the Gaelic, although mostly the older people converse in this language today. In order to provide land for the National Park the provincial government expropriated property which had been owned by these people from early in the 18th century. Descendants of these original settlers still dwell in the small fishing villages on the borders of the Park and in many cases continue handcrafts by the same methods used generations ago.

The Cabot Trail was named after John Cabot who, it is claimed, made his first landing in 1497, in northern Cape Breton Island. A cairn marking this location was erected in 1958. The Park and indeed the entire Island is rich in history as well as providing for full enjoyment of the scenic wonders.

ACCOMMODATION

A variety of accommodation is offered in the Park, details of which are listed in Where To Stay in the National Parks of Canada available at the Park Office.

Although the Park has been set apart primarily to preserve its natural features for the enjoyment of the present and future generations, the Parks Service has developed the natural beaches for swimming and has provided an 18-hole golf links, tennis courts, bowling green and playgrounds. The customary services of a modern community are provided in the nearby villages and in proximity of the Park developments.

Persons wishing additional information concerning the Park may address their inquiries to:

The Superintendent,
Cape Breton Highlands National Park,
Ingonish Beach, Nova Scotia.

or

National Parks Branch,
Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources,
Ottawa, Canada.