



Environment Canada
Parks Service

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Walking in the Highlands

A guide to the trails of
Cape Breton Highland National Park



YOU ARE IN BEAR COUNTRY

This is the home of the black bear. You are the visitor. The black bear is a strong, quick animal that demands your respect. If you surprise or threaten him, he will defend himself. A bear in the campground may appear tame, but remember—he is a wild animal. Do not feed him.

To avoid meeting a bear—

in your campsite: keep your site clean, place all garbage in containers, lock all food in your vehicle.

in the back country be alert: avoid food sources such as berry patches and carcass remains. Watch for signs—fresh tracks, digging and droppings. Keep your dog on a leash at all times.

If you meet a bear:

Stay away from bear cubs; the mother will be close by and ready to defend her young. Make a wide detour around the bear. Keep upwind so he will know you're there. Always leave him an escape route.

Photographers! Take photographs with telephoto lens.

If the bear becomes aggressive:

Speak quietly and walk backwards; let him know you mean no harm. Black bears are good climbers, so a tree may not offer an escape.

Don't let your carelessness bring harm to a bear. This is his country.






Cette publication est aussi disponible en français.

WALKING IN THE HIGHLANDS


Hiking in Cape Breton Highlands National Park—the chance to intimately explore the complex environment of northern Cape Breton Island.

We have 28 different trails ranging from short, 20 minute family strolls to challenging overnight adventures. Most are level; however, a few climb the mountains to panoramic lookoffs. Some hug the rocky shoreline while others explore our rich river valleys. Whatever your interest and physical ability you will find a trail to suit your tastes.

Trails are listed below under frequently requested categories; trail descriptions begin on page 6.

- e = self-guiding interpretive trail
-  = wheelchair accessible
-  = elevation change of more than 150 m (500 ft)
-  = wilderness camping

Short Trails (20 minutes or less; flat)

- 4 La Prairie
- 8 Bog e 
- 12 Lone Shieling e
- 19 Green Cove e
- 27 Freshwater Lake Lookout (steep)

Ocean Trails (relatively level)

- 5 Le Buttereau e 1.9 km Return
- 7 Skyline 7 km
- 10 Fishing Cove 16 km
- 15 Jack Pine e 2.8 km
- 16 Coastal 11 km
- 19 Green Cove e 0.4 km
- 25 Middle Head e 4 km
- 28 Freshwater Lake 2 km

Panoramic Views

Panoramic views of the ocean from a mountain top or plateau.

△ denotes a climb of 150 m (500 ft) or more.

1	L'Acadien	△	9.6 km	Return
7	Skyline		7 km	
10	Fishing Cove	△	16 km	
13	Aspy	△	9.6 km	
14	John D. Lake	△	15 km	
20	Broad Cove Mt.	△	3.2 km	
22	Lake of Islands	△	25.8 km	
23	Franey	△	6.4 km	
27	Freshwater Lake Lookout		0.4 km	

Plateau or Mountain-top Trails

(Boreal Forest & Taiga)

1	L'Acadien	△	9.6 km
7	Skyline		7 km
8	Bog	♿	0.6 km
9	Benjies Lake		3.2 km
14	John D. Lake	△	15 km
20	Broad Cove Mt.	△	3.2 km
22	Lake of Islands	△	25.8 km
23	Franey	△	6.4 km

Woodland River Valley Trails

(Acadian Mixed Forest)

(* = waterfalls)

2	Trous de Saumons		13 km
3	Le Chemin du Buttereau		5 km
4	La Prairie		1.2 km
6	Corney Brook	*	8 km
11	MacIntosh Brook	*	2.8 km
12	Lone Shieling	e	0.8 km
13	Aspy	△	9.6 km
24	Clyburn Valley		9.2 km

Self-Guiding Trails e

Acadians, Scots, sundews, orchids, hawks & dykes — discover their stories and many, many more on our self-guiding interpretive trails:

5	Le Buttereau	Acadian settlers
8	Bog	Highland barren wetlands
12	Lone Shieling	Scottish history and old-growth maple woodlands
15	Jack Pine	Regeneration after a forest fire
19	Green Cove	Coastal geology and plants
25	Middle Head	Coastal geology, plants and animals

Want to go fishing?

Eastern brook trout live in most of the Park's rivers and ponds. Fishermen have found that **4** La Prairie; **9** Benjies Lake, **17** Jigging Cove Lake; **21** Warren Lake; and the **24** Clyburn Brook offer the best results. The special challenge of **Atlantic Salmon** fly fishing awaits in the Cheticamp River. Remember though, you need a **National Park fishing permit** to fish in Park waters and a **special permit for angling salmon**.

Wilderness Camping ▲

10	Fishing Cove	▲	Ocean Cove
22	Lake of Islands	▲	Plateau barrens

Backpackers require a **backcountry use permit** available from the information centres or from Park Wardens. This permit must be turned in at the end of your trip. **Open fires are not allowed** except in designated fireplaces; we therefore, strongly recommend a portable campstove. **Disturbance of any plants, wildlife, rocks etc. is not permitted. In addition, all garbage must be packed out.**

Weather, Equipment & Bugs

July, August and September are the best months for hiking. In May & early June some highlands trails may still have snow.

Footwear: After a rainfall there may be **extremely wet or muddy** sections on some of the trails. We recommend comfortable, waterproof hiking boots for plateau trails (9,14,22) and a few of the lowland trails (10,16,18,23).

For the other trails, all you need is a good pair of walking shoes or sneakers.

Changeable Weather: Hikers on the plateau or along the coast should come prepared for rapid weather changes. A small knapsack packed with raingear, a light sweater and a little food is essential. Carry water on longer trails, especially those involving climbs or the open plateau barrens.

Insects: Don't forget to bring your insect repellent; blackflies and mosquitoes are common all summer. September's cooler weather limits the activity of these pesky insects, yet still allows hikers to pleasantly explore our hardwood river valleys.

TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS

Distances and times are round-trip.
Trail numbers correspond to Park map.

1 L'Acadien △ Length: 9.6 km (6 miles) loop
Hiking Time: 3½–4 hours
Elevation: 0–365 m (1150 ft)

The top of Burnt Mountain towers 365 meters over the Cheticamp River Valley. The **panoramic views** of the **Acadian coast**, from which this trail inherited its name, are unforgettable. The lookouts at the top offer ideal spots for a picnic and are usually bug free! Carry drinking water. Trail begins opposite the Cheticamp Visitor Centre.

2 Trous de Saumons Length: 13 km (8 miles) return
Hiking Time: 4–4½ hours
Elevation: 15–75 m (50–250 ft)

Known as **Salmon Pools**, this trail will interest more than fishermen. Ideal for family outings and **bird watching**, the walk is level, easy and usually dry to the First Pool, 3.6 km up the river valley.

The trail narrows and continues to Chance Pool, where the river has **polished** the exposed **bedrock**, creating an ideal location for a picnic. About an hour further on, the Third Pool marks the end of this trail. The trail starts in Robert Brook Campground, a few minutes walk from the Cheticamp Visitor Centre. **Mountain bicycles** are allowed but the trail surface is rough in places.

**3 Le Chemin
du Buttereau** Length: 5 km (3 miles) return
Hiking Time: 1½–2 hours
Elevation: 15–122 m
(50–400 ft)

Retrace the steps of the **Acadian pioneers** who travelled this path on their way to and from Le Buttereau. Starting at the edge of Melanie Pond at the Cheticamp Campground entrance, the trail offers **spruce tunnels**, old pastures and sparkling glimpses of the **Cheticamp River**.

The trail ends at the Buttereau trail junction. Once here, hikers can either return the way they came or continue on along Le Buttereau trail to the Cabot Trail and from there, back along the Cabot Trail to Melanie Pond. Hikers who choose the longer, latter option should set aside at least 2–2½ hours to complete the 6.1 km loop.

4 La Prairie Length: 1.2 km (¾ mile) loop
Hiking Time: ½ hour
Elevation: 15 m (50 ft)

The Acadians call it La Prairie—“the meadow that borders the river, as it reaches to the sea”. Built from silt and gravel carried downstream by the river, this area close to the mouth of the **Cheticamp River** teems with life.

The short **riverside trail**, located opposite the Cheticamp Campground's outdoor theatre, can be very pleasant during the latter part of the day. Then, the rays of the sun filtering through the beech and maple grove form amazing light patterns on the lush fern undergrowth.

5 Le Buttereau e Length: 1.9 km (1.2 miles) loop
Hiking Time: 40–50 minutes
Elevation: 0–122 m (0–400 ft)

This short **oceanside** trail meanders where **pioneer Acadians** first tilled the soil, many years ago. **Wildflowers**, trees and shrubs have invaded the old pastures left behind making it an ideal spot for **birds** and **mammals**. **Self-guiding**.

6 Corney Brook

Length: 8 km (5 miles) return
Hiking Time: 2–2½ hours
Elevation: 75 m (250 ft)

For a relaxing stroll, try Corney Brook. Following the meandering brook it's named after, the trail ends at a small **waterfall** that's especially picturesque after a rainstorm. Be on the watch for **wildlife**—you may see a variety of birds and occasionally white-tailed deer and snowshoe hare along this trail.

7 Skyline

Length: 7 km (4.3 miles) loop
Hiking Time: 2–3 hours
Elevation: 320–400 m
(1050–1350 ft)

From the vantage of a **headland cliff** you can peer down on cars on the Cabot Trail or look out to the **Gulf of St. Lawrence**. **Pilot whales**, **bald eagles** and **boreal birds** are frequently seen; you may also see evidence of **coyote**, **deer** or **moose**.

For a shorter hike, return the way you came instead of continuing around the loop.

8 Bog

Length: 0.6 km (0.4 mile) loop
Hiking Time: 20–30 minutes
Elevation: 410 m (1350 ft)

Pitcher plants, **orchids**, **green frogs** and **moose** are just some of the many plants and animals that live in this **highland plateau bog**. Explore this short level boardwalk trail. You'll be surprised at what you can discover without getting wet! **Self-guiding**.

9 Benjies Lake

Length: 3.2 km (2 miles) return
Hiking Time: 1–1½ hours
Elevation: 396–400 m
(1300–1350 ft)

Situated on the top of the plateau, Benjies Lake offers good opportunities for **fishermen**, especially in early spring. On the way to the lake you'll discover a bit of the **plateau**, as the trail crosses **wet barrens** and **evergreen forests** typical of the highlands. When you reach the lake, keep a watchful eye out for **moose**. Observation platform at lake.

10 Fishing Cove

Length: 16 km (10 miles) return
Hiking Time: 4–5 hours
Elevation: 0–330 m (0–1100 ft)

Imagine going to sleep to the sound of the surf outside your tent. You can enjoy this experience at Fishing Cove, the site of an old Scottish fishing community and now one of the Park's two designated **wilderness campgrounds**. The trail down to the **ocean cove** hugs the edge of the **rugged Fishing Cove River**. Once at the cove, explore the **beach**, roam the hills or swim in either fresh or salt water.

11 MacIntosh Brook

Length: 2.8 km (1¾ miles) return
Hiking Time: 40–50 minutes
Elevation: 30 m (100 ft)

This **short dry** trail starts at the far end of MacIntosh Brook Campground and allows you to explore life in a **mature hardwood forest**. Listen for the sound of the birds, the gurgling of MacIntosh Brook and the rustle of the leaves beneath your feet. Scenic **waterfalls** mark the end of the trail.

12 Lone Shieling

Length: 0.8 km (½ mile) loop
Hiking Time: 15–20 minutes
Elevation: 75 m (250 ft)

Here you will find **300 year old sugar maple** trees surrounding a replica of a **Scottish sheep crofter's hut**. What is a Scottish sheep crofter's hut doing in northern Cape Breton, and how large are 300 year old sugar maple trees? Discover the answers to these and other questions on this short, dry trail. You won't be disappointed! Washrooms are mid-way around the trail. **Self-guiding**.

13 Aspy

Length: 9.6 km (6 miles) return
Hiking Time: 2–3 hours
Elevation: 60–450 m
(200–1500 ft)

Picnic at **Beulach Ban Falls**, then stroll along this old fire access trail through an impressive **forest** of maple, birch and oak. Below, sea trout and salmon lurk in the dark pools of the North Aspy; above towers **North Mountain** and the plateau. This trail follows the **Aspy Valley** for 2.4 km and then narrows into a footpath which climbs the valley side to a **lookoff**. Hikers may find the climb difficult but the scenic glimpses of the valley, North Mountain and the plateau make it worthwhile.

14 John D. Lake △ Length: 15 km (9 miles) return
Hiking Time: 6–7 hours
Elevation: 260–460 m
(850–1500 ft)

From the parking lot at Paquette Lake, follow an old fire access trail across **barrens**, over hills and through **softwood stands** as far as Glasgow Lake. There the trail narrows to a footpath and leads to the top of **Glasgow Lake Hill** where you can see for miles. The trail ends at John D. Lake with its small but inviting sandy beach and large population of pan-sized **brook trout**. This trail can be extremely **wet** and **mucky** in the spring or during wet summers, but the **panoramic views** of the open barrens and ocean are rewarding.

15 Jack Pine e Length: 2.8 km (1.7 miles) loop
Hiking Time: 1 hour
Elevation: 30 m (100 ft)

Along this loop trail you will discover trees that grow in the cracks of rocks and need a forest fire to open their cones. **Jack Pine**, though common in the boreal forests of Canada, are relatively rare in Cape Breton. The trail threads through several stands of spruce, fir and pine, ultimately reaching the coast and the **16 Coastal Trail**, your route back. **Self-guiding**.

16 Coastal Length: 11 km (6.6 miles) return
Hiking Time: 3–4 hours
Elevation: 15–30 m (50–100 ft)

This trail hugs the **ocean shoreline**. Here you can feel the salt spray and listen to the sounds of the waves crashing against the hard **granite headlands**. Whales surfacing, fish schooling and gulls soaring—parts of the marine environment alert hikers

can experience along this section of rugged coast. Be careful of footing on the cobble beaches.

This trail has two trailheads, one at Black Brook, the other at Halfway Brook. It is recommended that hikers start at Black Brook and hike to Halfway Brook. There, hikers have the option of returning over the route they have just travelled or turning left and following the Cabot Trail 4.1 km back to Black Brook.

17 Jigging Cove Lake Length: 4.8 km (3 miles) loop
Hiking Time: 1–1½ hours
Elevation: 45 m (150 ft)

Jigging Cove Lake—small, shallow, but highly productive—attracts many types of visitors. Fishermen come to test their skill against the elusive **brook trout**, while birders and others simply enjoy the varied **wildlife** the **short relaxing trail** around the lake reveals.

18 Jigging Cove Brook Length: 7 km (4.3 miles) loop
Hiking Time: 2–2½ hours
Elevation: 15–45 m (50–100 ft)

This short 1.5 km path connects Jigging Cove Lake Trail with the Coastal Trail, providing hikers with a 7 km loop that explores both the inland and coastal environments protected within the Park.

From Black Brook, hikers should follow the Coastal trail until they see the sign for Jigging Cove Brook Trail, which will lead to Jigging Cove Lake. From here, follow Jigging Cove Lake Trail to the Cabot Trail. To return to Black Brook turn left and follow the Cabot Trail 1.7 km.

Note: Hikers can also start at Jigging Cove Lake trailhead and follow the trail in the opposite direction.

19 Green Cove e Length: 0.4 km (¼ mile) loop
Hiking Time: 15–20 minutes
Elevation: 15 m (50 ft)

An ideal short stroll, Green Cove trail meanders over a **rocky headland** jutting into the **sea**. There, you can feel the steady

throb of the ocean and learn to appreciate its strength. The action of the waves during violent storms keeps the rocks exposed. Look closely and examine **geological history** at your feet! **Self-guiding**.

20 Broad Cove Mountain

Length: 3.2 km (2 miles) return
Hiking Time: 1½–2 hours
Elevation: 30–180 m
(100–600 ft)

Up, up and away! This **short switchbacked trail** takes you to the top of Broad Cove Mountain where you get an **eagle's view** of Warren Lake, Broad Cove Campground and the **Atlantic Ocean**. You in turn, may be watched! Bald eagles frequently soar over Warren Lake.

21 Warren Lake

Length: 8.5 km (5.3 miles) loop
Hiking Time: 2½–3 hours
Elevation: 15 m (50 ft)

For a **relaxing walk** or early morning jog, this level trail is hard to beat. Starting either at the Warren Lake picnic area or the entrance to Broad Cove Campground, the trail hugs the **shoreline** of Warren Lake and is alive with **wildlife**. Birds of all sorts and sizes flit through the trees and ragged branches show evidence of **moose** and **deer**. Quiet, alert hikers may even catch a glimpse of one of these elusive animals.

22 Lake of Islands

Length: 25.8 km
(16 miles) return
Hiking Time: 8–9 hours
Elevation: 100–300 m
(350–1250 ft)

This trail threads around several **bogs** and across **large barrens**, finally ending at a primitive **campsite** located on the shore of Lake of Islands, in the midst of the **plateau**. The hiking is in keeping with the countryside—harsh, difficult and challenging. The trail is **usually wet**, the ground rocky and the weather changeable. A rewarding wilderness experience awaits those ready to accept this challenge.

A **lookoff**, 4 km from the trailhead, offers a panoramic view of the Atlantic coast from the high barrens.

23 Franey

Length: 6.4 km (4 miles) loop
Hiking Time: 3–4 hours
Elevation: 120–425 m
(400–1400 ft)

Hiking Franey trail will require a bit of energy! You climb 366 m in just 3 km, but the **views from the top** are well worth it—the **open sea**, Middle Head and Cape Smokey to the east, Money Point to the north, the sheer face of **Franey Mountain** to the south and 427 m below, the **Clyburn Valley**. We suggest following the hiking trail to the top of the mountain and returning by the fire tower access road.

24 Clyburn Valley

Length: 9.2 km (5.7 miles) return
Hiking Time: 2–3 hours
Elevation: 30 m (100 ft)

Gold! This trail offers a variety of features to explore, including the ruins of an **old gold mine**. Hikers will also marvel at spectacular stands of hardwood trees, boulders bigger than cars, and old abandoned beaver ponds. Ideal for family outings, this trail offers **level, easy** and usually dry walking as it winds through the **rich Clyburn River Valley**.

25 Middle Head

Length: 4 km (2½ miles) return
Hiking Time: 1½–2 hours
Elevation: 15 m (50 ft)

This trail reaches to the tip of the Middle Head **peninsula**. Appropriately named, the peninsula separates Ingonish Bay into two almost equal halves, **North and South Bay**. The trail provides a refreshing walk offering hikers views of both bays, Cape Smokey and Tern Rock—a **sea stack** where common and arctic **terns** nest during June and July. The tip of the trail is closed in nesting season to avoid disturbing these sensitive birds—please comply. **Fishing boats, whales** and other **sea-birds** may be seen. **Self-guiding**.

26 Black Rock Lookout

Length: 0.3 km (½ mile) return
Hiking Time: 10–15 minutes
Elevation: 15 m (50 ft)

For a close-up view of a **sea stack** in the making try this lookoff. What's a sea stack? It's a column of rock once joined to the mainland by softer rock that has been eroded away by the sea, leaving the column as a small island.

27 Freshwater Lake Lookout

Length: 0.4 km (¼ mile) return
Hiking Time: 10–15 minutes
Elevation: 0–30 m (0–100 ft)

Whether you're just starting or ending your visit to Cape Breton Highlands National Park, the view from the top of this **short but steep trail** provides a warm welcome or a fond farewell. Don't forget to take your camera—Ingonish Beach, Freshwater Lake, Middle Head and Cape Smokey all form part of the **picturesque vista** that unfolds below you.

28 Freshwater Lake

Length: 2 km (1.2 miles) return
Hiking Time: 30 minutes
Elevation: Sea level

Finish off your swim or picnic at Freshwater Lake with a relaxing stroll along this **short, level, dry** trail. If you're lucky, you might even be able to watch a **beaver** or **muskrat** swimming in the lake. The trail starts next to the **ocean** and hugs the **lake's shoreline** until it reaches a portion of the old Cabot Trail. There, turn right and you will return to the parking lot.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Information Centres at the Cheticamp and Ingonish entrances to the Park are open from mid-May to mid-October and our staff there would be pleased to answer any of your questions.

A **photo album** showing scenic viewpoints along all Park hiking trails is located in each Information Centre.

SELECTED READING

- A) **The Hiking Trails of Cape Breton Highlands National Park** (1982), published by Les Amis du Plein Air, contains a more detailed review of Park trails, including information on vegetation and wildlife. Detailed maps showing the route of each trail are also provided.

- B) **Cape Breton Highlands National Park 1:50,000 Topographic Map.** This topographic map also features detailed narratives on the reverse side of the map describing the Park area.

To purchase these and other materials please write to **Les Amis du Plein Air**, P.O. Box 472, Cheticamp, Nova Scotia, B0E 1H0, (902) 224-3814 or 224-3403 or visit their Nature Bookshops at either Information Centre.

Park Address: Superintendent, Cape Breton Highlands National Park, Ingonish Beach, Nova Scotia, B0C 1L0.
Telephone: (902) 285-2691.

NATIONAL PARK REGULATIONS ARE STRICTLY ENFORCED:

- Do not disturb or collect anything including plants, rocks, kindling, wildlife etc.
- Keep pets on leashes at all times.
- Pack out all garbage.
- Fires are only permitted in designated fireplaces.
- Alcoholic beverages are only permitted at your campsite.

Special hiking crests are awarded to those who hike a total distance of 100 km or more on Park and other trails in Cape Breton. (11–15 years: 50 km; 10 and under: 20 km.) To be eligible, at least one half of distance must be within Cape Breton Highlands National Park.

Simply bring in your hiker's log to either Information Centre or just mail it to the address above.

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HIKER'S LOG

Name:

Address:

Postal/Zip Code

Age (If 15 years or under)

Date	Trail Name and Comments	Distance Hiked (km)
Total Distance hiked in C.B.H.N.P.		
Total Distance Cape Breton (outside Park)		
Grand Total		

1 km = 0.6 miles