



**Bruce Peninsula  
National Park of Canada  
Fathom Five  
National Marine Park of Canada**

**Climate**

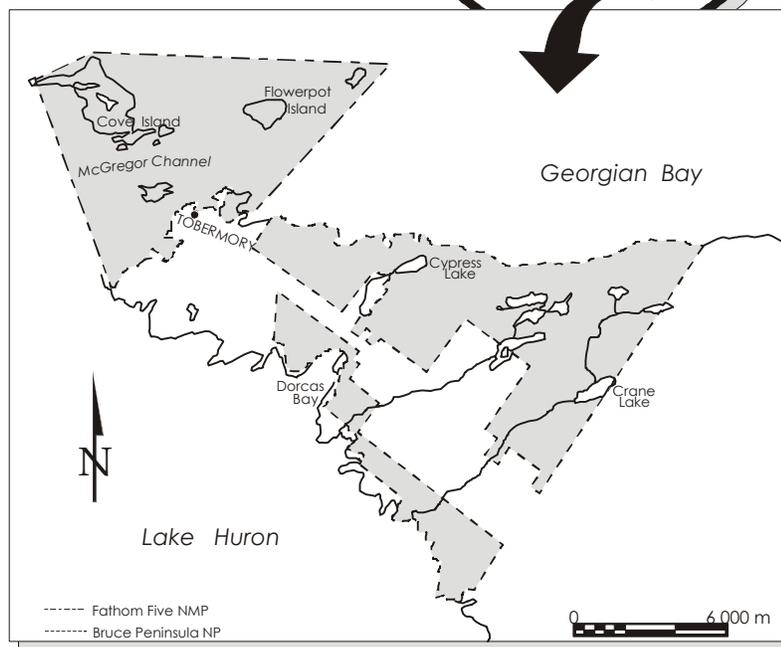
The climatic conditions in the area of the northern Peninsula are among the most temperate in Canada. Both Georgian Bay and Lake Huron moderate the Peninsula's climate. Temperatures in the summer months (June-August) average 16.8°C daily. Annual precipitation amounts to almost 900 mm, and can include heavy spring rains and snowfall. Autumn storms can be fierce; a fact attested to by the large number of shipwrecks within Fathom Five.

**Geology**

The Bruce Peninsula is an 80 km finger of dolomitic limestone that forms the northern end of the Niagara Escarpment. The Niagara Escarpment, with its rugged limestone walls reaching up to 100 m high, dominates the Georgian Bay (northeast) side of the parks. The Escarpment is the edge of a giant 'saucer' that slants gently from northeast to southwest and dips to its centre in Michigan. This geologic formation is known as the Michigan Basin. It had its origins in shallow tropical seas over 400 million years ago. Fossils of marine life can be found in the rocks as testament to this period of time. The Escarpment submerges in Georgian Bay and reappears as islands in Fathom Five, where water has carved the famous flowerpot formations. Boulders and thick deposits of till reflect past glacial activity.

**Location**

These two national parks are located in southwestern Ontario, on the tip of the Bruce Peninsula. Bruce Peninsula is 154 km<sup>2</sup> and Fathom Five is 113 km<sup>2</sup> in size. Established in 1987, the parks represent Canada's Western St. Lawrence Lowlands Natural Region and Georgian Bay Marine Region, and are located in the Mixedwood Plains Ecozone. The town of Tobermory, where the Parks' operations are based, is approximately 300 km northwest of Toronto.



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## Vegetation



A variety of ecosystems exist within both parks – from open grassland and sand dune scrubland, to mixed-wood forest and wetland. Over 34 species of orchids can be found, including the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Habenaria leucophaea*), one of the rarest in North America. There are also about 32 species of ferns and several species of insect-eating plants. Forest cover is relatively young, replacing the original forests lost mainly to logging in the late 1800s, and to fire. Very few old-growth pines are left, and the forest cover is predominantly eastern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), with a mixture of spruce, fir, birch, poplar, maple and beech. Along the shores of the Peninsula are dwarfed and twisted cedars, that are surprising old – many of these stunted trees are over 600 years old.

## Wildlife

This region also has a great diversity of wildlife. The most southern population of black bears in Canada can be found in these parks. The caves and crevices of the Escarpment make excellent roosts for 7 of Ontario's 8 bat species. Other mammal species include deer, beaver, fox, fisher, porcupine, otter, and many more. Over 300 species of birds have been recorded including shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds. The shape of the Peninsula funnels the migration of these birds. The parks protect a number of threatened reptile species; two of which are the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake and Spotted Turtle. The crystal clear cold waters of Georgian Bay and Lake Huron, and the warmer and shallower bays and inland lakes support crayfish, sculpins, pike, perch, salmon, trout, bass, and other fish.



## Cultural History

The lives of Tobermory residents have always centred around boating activities in its two harbours. Its strategic location has made it a port of refuge and an ideal base of operations for canoe, mackinaw boat, schooner, steamer, yacht, fishing tug, car ferry, dive tug, and tour boat. A number of factors have combined to make this area the 'Shipwreck Capital of Canada'. Two lightstations and one lighthouse can be found in Fathom Five, as a testimony to the area's marine heritage.

Both Parks lie within the traditional lands and waters of the Saugeen Ojibway Nations. Oral History and archaeological evidence suggest that their ancestors were on the Peninsula as early as 7500 years ago. These First Nations people continue to use this area for sustenance, ceremonial purposes, and commerce.



## Activities

Some of Ontario's finest scenery can be found in these two parks; consequently, they offer phenomenal hiking opportunities. The most rugged parts of the Bruce Trail pass through Bruce Peninsula National Park. Side trails are found along both Georgian Bay and Lake Huron shorelines. Visitors can also hike on Flowerpot Island in Fathom Five. Both Cyprus Lake and Dorcas Bay (Singing Sands) have sand beaches and offer good (but unsupervised) swimming. Three campgrounds offer over 240 unserviced sites for tents and trailers. Fishing is popular in both the inland lakes and on Georgian Bay. Fathom Five contains 21 shipwrecks, a major attraction for divers and snorkellers. Local captains offer cruises including glass-bottom boat tours and diving excursions. Paddling is also a unique way to experience both the shipwrecks and outstanding shoreline beauty. A provincial ferry service runs between Tobermory and Manitoulin Island. The Visitor Centre, located in Tobermory, is open daily throughout the tourist season. Park staff and the *Friends* offer many programs for visitors, including children's programs, amphitheatre presentations, guided hikes, and campfires.