



Cape Breton Highlands

National Park of Canada

Climate

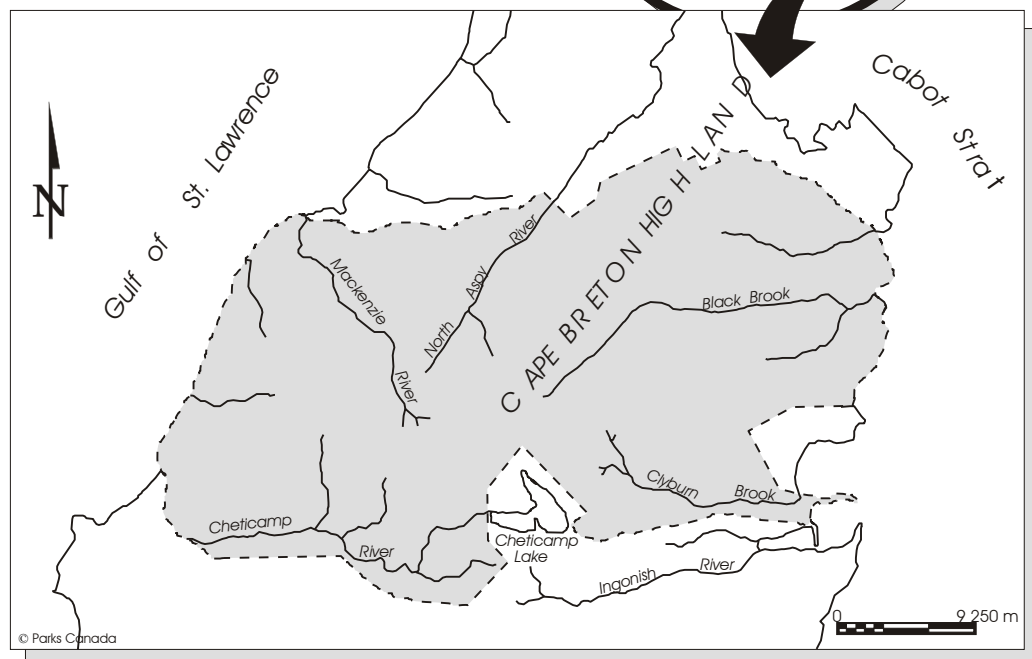
The park's climate is typically maritime, moderated by the proximity of large bodies of water. The park's northern section is in a snow belt, where moist air from the Gulf produces the kind of snowfall more often associated with winter ski resorts.

Geology

The highlands of Cape Breton Island were formed by the same geologic forces that created the ancient Appalachian mountain range. Many of the park's rivers follow old faults in the bedrock, and there are fine examples of cliffs, canyons, and talus slopes. Today, the forces of wind and water are the major landscaping agents in the park. Numerous waterfalls and swift-flowing streams are found in the park.

Location

Canada's national park on northern Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia was established in 1936. The first national park in the Atlantic provinces, Cape Breton Highlands protects some 950 km² of coastal wilderness nestled between the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Atlantic Ocean. The park is about 70 km north of Sydney, and 350 km northeast of Halifax. The area is a sample of Canada's Maritime Acadian Highlands Natural Region, and represents some of the province's last remaining wilderness. This is an area rich in Acadian, Scottish, Newfoundland, Mi'kmaq and Irish heritage, and includes one of the most scenic stretches of the world-famous Cabot Trail. Cape Breton Highlands is located in the Atlantic Maritime Ecozone.



Vegetation

The park has significant plant resources. It is part of the Acadian forest region. Excellent examples of this forest type are found in river valleys and other low-lying areas, and include beech, yellow birch, sugar maple, and eastern hemlock. At higher elevations one can find true boreal vegetation, characterized by balsam fir, black spruce, and muskeg. These bogs, as well as certain barren highland areas, contain rare alpine and arctic species. Some remnant apple orchards and old fields can still be found in areas that were used for agriculture before the establishment of the park.



Wildlife

Much of Cape Breton's wildlife is typical of eastern Canada and includes moose, white-tailed deer, red fox, and squirrels. There are a number of significant species. Some 15 of the park's native mammal species are considered rare, threatened, or endangered. Several species of reptiles and amphibians reach the northern limit of their ranges within the park. Brook trout and Atlantic salmon are major fish species. Birdlife includes coastal species like gannets and terns. The largest concentration of breeding Bald Eagles in Nova Scotia is found in northern Cape Breton. Peregrine falcons migrate through this area. Whales and seals inhabit the marine areas around the park.

Activities

Visitors to Cape Breton Highlands National Park will find much to do during their stay. Sightseeing along the Cabot Trail, with its self-guided walkways, spectacular lookouts, and picnic pull-offs, is a must. The section of the trail within the park can be driven in about two hours, but to fully appreciate its subtle splendour one should take at least a couple of days. Walking and hiking trails can be found throughout the park, and both freshwater and saltwater swimming is possible. Campers will find six campgrounds with 550 sites, while other visitors can choose to stay in roofed accommodations both in and outside the park. With a licence, anglers will enjoy the excellent trout and salmon fishing, though no motorized boats are permitted in the park. Highland Links, ranked 57th in the world by Golf Magazine, is an 18 hole, par 72 course, with the bonus of beautiful scenery. Winters provide plenty of snow for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and winter camping. Winter skiers and hikers will find a number of shelters along many of the trails. Interpreters offer a variety of educational programs about the human and natural heritage of northern Cape Breton for visitors to participate in.

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