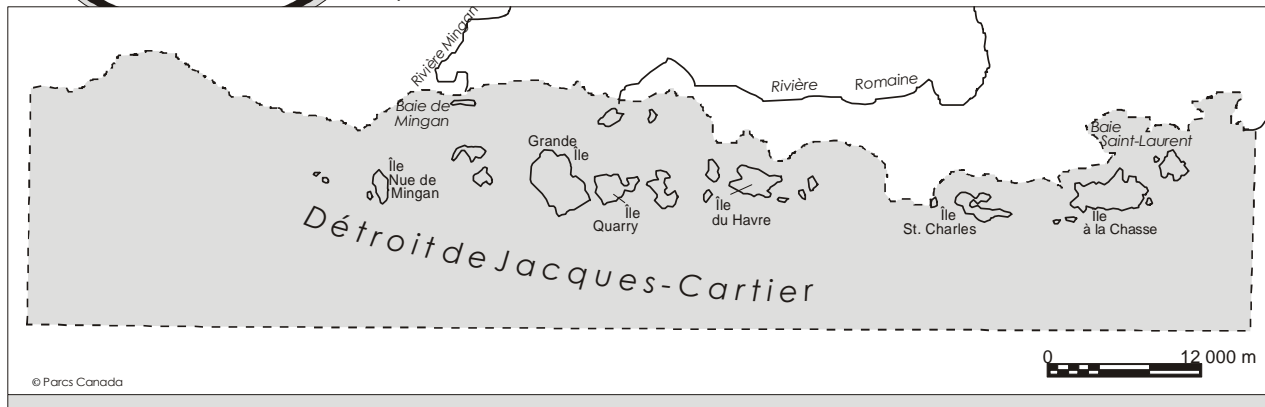




Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve of Canada

Climate

The Minganie region has a temperate maritime climate, characterized by relatively cool summers and long winters. High atmospheric humidity causes frequent fog. Cold currents from Labrador exert their influence on the area, as do the shifting seaward and landward air masses. An upwelling of nutrient-rich cold water accounts for the abundant life in the waters surrounding the islands. The average temperature in July is 14.5°C. Long winters contrast with summer conditions that alternate between periods of fog or rain and long, hot, sunny periods. The growing season is quite short due to the long winters.



Geology

The Mingan Archipelago is composed of sedimentary bedrock which is visibly present in formations such as the monoliths (called flowerpots) and the cliffs. The main rock types are limestone and dolomite. Ordovician fossils can be found in the layers of rock. Over 100 types of fossilized life forms have been identified. Post glacial marine erosion is responsible for many of the park's landscape features. The islands are essentially a series of low plateaus, old beaches and cliffs, witnesses of past sea levels. The eastern sector of the park reserve also includes nearly a thousand islands and islets with interesting geological features typical of crystalline rock from the Canadian Shield.

Location

Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve of Canada, located in the Gulf of St. Lawrence comprises some 40 limestone islands and more than a 1000 granitic islands and islets strung over 150 km like a necklace of rare beauty. The Archipelago, which lies just off the Middle North Shore total 97 km². Created in 1984, the Mingan Archipelago protects an area representative of the Eastern St. Lawrence Lowlands natural region. Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve of Canada is located in the Boreal Shield Ecozone.

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Vegetation

Vegetation is predominantly boreal forest with white spruce stands covering 65% of the area. The remainder is composed of peat bogs, barrens, cliffs and shoreline. The plant life is exceptional for its diversity and the number of rare species. Vegetation varies according to soil type, climate and the influence of the sea. There are over 490 species of vascular plants, 302 species of mosses, and 190 species of lichens in the park. Many are plants of interest such as species endemic to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, arctic-alpine plants at the outer limits of their distribution area, and cordilleran species characteristic of the Rocky Mountains. The best two known rare species are Mingan thistle and sparrow's-egg lady's-slipper.

Wildlife

The Mingan Archipelago is a significant location for seabirds. Many nesting species can be observed in the park, including common eider, Atlantic puffins, razorbills, terns, gulls, cormorants, and guillemots. Beginning in July, the park becomes a major migration stopover for shorebirds like the red knot. About 75 000 eiders use the park as an overwintering area. Mammals are less abundant, largely due to the relative inaccessibility of the islands. Snowshoe hares are fairly numerous, while beaver, red fox, and red squirrels can also be found in smaller populations. Occasional black bear or moose can be observed. Marine mammals in the surrounding waters primarily consist of minke whales, harbour porpoises, grey and harbour seals.



Activities

The Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve of Canada can be accessed via boat excursion or kayaking. Many recreational activities - walking, hiking, picnicking, and bird-watching - are permitted. Visitors can also camp in campsites provided by Parks Canada. Interpretive programs and guided hikes are offered on some islands from June to August. There is one Visitor Center in Havre-Saint-Pierre another in Longue-Pointe-de-Mingan and two information offices in Baie-Johan-Beetz and Aguanish. Two exhibitions, one permanent and the other temporary offer visitors an alternative way to discover the park. Evening talks are also offered.

For more information:

Mingan Archipelago National Park
Reserve of Canada
1340 de la Digue
Havre-Saint-Pierre, QC G0G 1P0
Telephone: 418 538-3331
Fax: 418 538-3595
Website: www.pc.gc.ca/mingan