

Canada's Marvelous Parks

Nothing has a more precisely limited life than a calendar; nothing on earth is closer to immortality than a mountain. The great natural parks that are literally part of Canada today are also the ageless essence of the earth itself. In this issue of *Canada Today/d'aujourd'hui* we offer a quick and random tour of the parks – peaks, glades, fauna, flowers and wind-swept shores.

Cover photo: Banff National Park, Alberta, 1933

Prince Albert National Park, Saskatchewan



"In wilderness is the preservation of the world." Henry David Thoreau.

Banff, on the Alberta edge of the Rockies, is Canada's oldest and most popular national park. It was dedicated in 1885, twenty years before Alberta became a province, and it now attracts some four million visitors annually.

It has been joined over the years by thirty other national parks and scores of provincial ones. Eight – Nahanni, L'Anse aux Meadows, Kluane, the Burgess Shale in Yoho, Wood Buffalo, Dinosaur, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump and Anthony Island – have been designated World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. Some parks have fossils; one (Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump) has bones; and the rest have living birds and beasts, flowers and running water. Most have a mix: Forillon on the Gaspé peninsula, for example, has limestone cliffs, sandy shores, salt marshes, wooded hills and hidden valleys, all kept in their natural state. The original federal law requires that the parks be "unimpaired," and this applies to fauna, flora, the ambient air and the rushing streams.

Though Banff was established with the enthusiastic cooperation of the railroads and hotel keepers, the parks are not intended to be simply recreation havens. Many in the North can be penetrated

only with extreme difficulty, and one may assume the next one scheduled for dedication, the 15,251-square-mile national park at Ellesmere Island, far, far above the Arctic Circle, will always be free of crowds and litter. Parks Canada's grand plan calls for a total of fifty, displaying most, if not all, of Canada's forty-eight natural regions. Twenty are represented now, some more than once. The Rockies, for example, are found in six parks.

The parks attract as many Americans as Canadians and three have direct links with the United States. Kluane in the Yukon shares tree roots, birds' nests and a joint designation as a World Heritage Site with the adjoining Wrangell-St. Elias Park in Alaska, and in 1932 Waterton Lakes National Park was merged with the American Glacier National Park at the instigation of the Rotary Clubs of Montana and Alberta as the "International Peace Park." Visitors to Campobello in New Brunswick, the summer home of young Franklin Delano Roosevelt, cross over to it by bridge from Maine.

The splendors of the parks are there to be shared – part of the common wealth of mankind.

St. Lawrence Islands National Park, Ontario