

National parks in Canada: something to celebrate



Canada has become one of the most industrialized nations in the world, but there are still many unspoiled wilderness areas in the country representing a national heritage highly valued by Canadians. The need to protect these areas for future generations has led to the creation of the largest national parks system in the world: 32 parks covering a total area greater than 130 000 square kilometres.

More than 21 million people visit Canada's national parks annually, and this year, with the centennial celebrations commemorating the creation of Canada's first national park, Banff, the number of visitors is expected to be even higher.

Special activities

While all the national parks offer camping, photography, hiking or picnicking, each park lends itself to some particular activities.

In summer, the beautiful beaches of Prince Edward Island, Gros Morne, Forillon

or Pacific Rim parks or the hot springs at Banff, Jasper or Kootenay can be enjoyed. Trail-rides on horseback enable visitors to discover the splendours of Banff, Jasper, Waterton Lakes, Yoho, Prince Albert and Riding Mountain parks, while canoeing is the best way to explore La Mauricie and Kejimikujik parks. Excellent fishing can be found at Terra Nova, Fundy (which features some of the highest tides in the world), Cape Breton Highlands and La Mauricie.

In winter, ice fishing is popular at Riding Mountain and Jasper. The snow-capped peaks in Glacier, Kluane and Auyuittuq offer challenges to the experienced mountain climber, while Jasper and Banff, offer skiing for beginners and experts alike.

Commercial beginnings

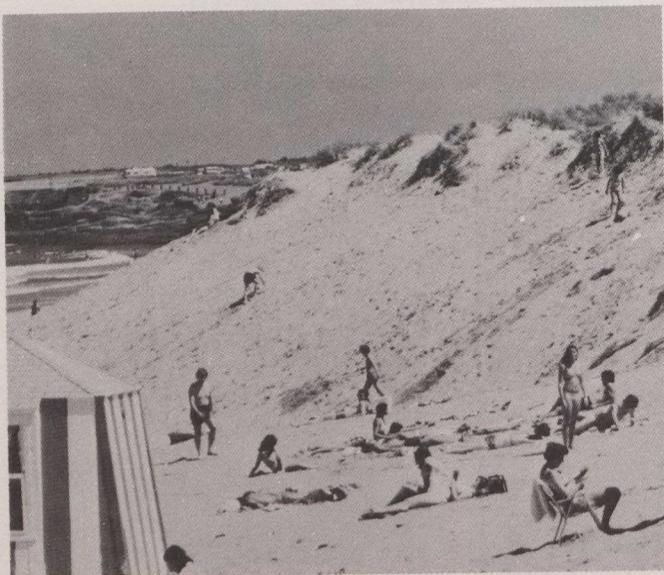
The origins of Canada's national parks are linked to the construction of the trans-continental railway. In 1883, crews working on the railroad in the Rockies discovered the Cave and Basin Hot Springs and in 1885, the Canadian government set aside 26 square kilometres surrounding the two springs to be developed as a wilderness spa. Two years later, the area was expanded to 673 square kilometres and called the Rocky Mountains Park; it was renamed Banff National Park in 1930.

Today, Banff encompasses 6 641 square kilometres and with the development of extensive facilities and the growth of skiing, it has become a year-round resort. It is Canada's most popular and busiest park and is visited annually by more than 3 million people.

All of Canada's national parks are managed by Parks Canada. Numerous volunteers assist in many of the programs which



The mountain peaks towering above Moraine Lake in Banff National Park are one of Canada's best-known vistas. The view appears on the reverse of the country's \$20 bills and is featured on the \$2 definitive stamp issued by Canada Post to mark the Banff centennial.



Red sandstone cliffs and dunes distinguish the beautiful beaches in Prince Edward Island National Park.



Point Pelee National Park features a wildlife sanctuary, a marsh area, southern flora, as well as beaches and nature trails.

Parks Canada photos