

NEWFOUNDLAND

A beautiful and secluded stretch of beach at Sandbanks Provincial Park.



meet you at

the beach!

by Doug Wallace

FOR A PLACE WITHOUT A SUN-AND-SAND reputation, Canada certainly has an abundance of shorelines, stretching farther than in any other country in the world. Add to this the thousands of kilometres of lakeshores big and small, and you

have a waterfront scene that could take lifetimes to explore. Here are our picks for the warmest water, the best sand, surf and swimming, the tiny hidden gems and the bountiful aquatic wonders, all right under our noses, from coast to coast. ➤

YUKON

RUGGED WILDERNESS
KLUANE LAKE, KLUANE NATIONAL PARK
AND RESERVE

Located in Yukon's southwest, Kluane translates to “big fish,” and for good reason: Lake trout and arctic grayling are in abundance. The area around this 70-km-long lake is a wildlife paradise, complete with fishing lodges, camping outposts and rugged treks.

Wow Factor: This park is not a UNESCO World Heritage site for nothing. The lake's panoramic beauty is beyond belief.

Nota Bene: Grizzlies are plentiful. Also, a 100-pound “monster” fish is said to inhabit the lake, and there are rumours of bite wounds...

Where It's At: From Whitehorse, take the Alaska Highway toward Destruction Bay.

pc.gc.ca/pn-np/yt/kluane/index.aspx.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

SURFER'S PARADISE
LONG BEACH, PACIFIC RIM NATIONAL PARK
With 16 km of beautiful, accessible sand on Wickaninnish Bay, Long Beach lives up to its name. Spread out between the villages of Ucluelet and Tofino, this natural wonder is steeped in the histories of both the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations and the European explorers. Today, it's a surfing hotspot, with surf guards on duty in the summer. Head to Wickaninnish Beach for a breathtaking view of crashing waves, and make a pit stop at the Wickaninnish Interpretive Centre for a hit of natural history.

Wow Factor: This place has some of the most consistent surf on the planet. Catch a wave with *surfsister.com*.

Where It's At: On the west side of Vancouver Island, about three hours west of Victoria.

longbeachmaps.com.

HIPPIE'S DREAM
WRECK BEACH, PACIFIC SPIRIT PARK,
VANCOUVER

The largest clothing-optional beach in Canada, located near the University of British Columbia campus, is “awesome in its quirkiness,” according to one local aficionado. Part of a larger scheme of beaches and parkland on Point Grey, Wreck Beach is littered with sun worshippers, students and teachers, not to mention urbanites looking to get the heck out of Dodge. Vendors are close by with the usual beach-related snacks, drinks and hemp jewellery.

Wow Factor: Naked people! Everywhere!

Nota Bene: About 500 wooden steps lead you down the bluff (Trail 6) to the beach – and back up.

Where It's At: From 4th Avenue in Vancouver, turn right on N.W. Marine Drive, and Trail 6 is to the left (you need to drive only about 100 metres). There's a parking lot south of Trail 6 and a few lots on the UBC campus. *wreckbeach.org*.

WHALE-WATCHING MECCA
CHESTERMAN BEACH, VANCOUVER ISLAND
The North and South Beaches are broken up by a sandspit that reaches out to Frank Island, offering about 3 km of white sand. There's great surfing (check out Tofino's surf schools and equipment rentals if you're up for adventure) and storm



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
Swimmers splash in 21-degree water at Basin Head Provincial Park.



QUEBEC
Dramatic cliffs meet golden sand at Îles de la Madeleine, Gulf of St Lawrence.

P.E.I. PHOTO, DAN LIM/MASTERFILE, HEADSTAND PHOTO, PERGREFF/MONDADORI SYNDICATION, QUEBEC PHOTO, FIRST LIGHT/CORBIS.



NEW BRUNSWICK
Hopewell Rocks Provincial Park boasts the highest tides in the world.

GIRL WITH SURFBOARD PHOTO, CHRIS FERGUSON/ACP/JEG PHOTO, KAYAKS PHOTO, RICHARD T. NOWITZ/CORBIS.

SASKATCHEWAN

MINERAL-SPA MAGIC
MANITOU BEACH, LITTLE MANITOU LAKE
The prairies' answer to the Dead Sea, this resort village draws people looking for a relaxing spa getaway at a unique site. Bathers “take the waters,” absorbing the therapeutic minerals (magnesium, carbonate, potassium, mineral salts, sodium, calcium, iron, silica and sulphur) concentrated in this shallow saltwater lake. The water is too dense for any real swimming – there's five times as much salt here as there is in the ocean – but the floating is fun and it's virtually impossible to sink. The Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa is the spot to check in. *manitousprings.ca*.

Wow Factor: Experience weightlessness without having to sign up for a NASA shuttle.

Where It's At: From Highway 2 at Watrous, drive north on 365. *manitoubeach.ca*.



BRITISH COLUMBIA
Canadian surf sisters love the west coast for its consistent breaks.

FAMILY FUN
GOOD SPIRIT LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK,
CANORA

This busy, sandy spot is excellent for relaxing, sunbathing, golfing, hiking, fishing (for walleye, northern pike and perch), cycling, tennis, beach volleyball and more. There are three separate campgrounds that are super-popular with young families.

Wow Factor: Watch for foxes, deer and rabbits in the dunes.

Nota Bene: Also keep an eye out for moose everywhere else.

Where It's At: Canora is just a half-hour drive northwest from Yorkton. *tpcs.gov.sk.ca/GoodSpiritLake*.

MANITOBA

STUNNING SETTING
GRAND BEACH, GRAND BEACH PROVINCIAL
PARK, LAKE WINNIPEG

The 3-km stretch of silica sand among the rolling dunes of Lake Winnipeg, Canada's sixth-largest lake, sees thousands of visitors each summer taking in the sun, surf, swimming and self-guided trails. Home to the endangered piping plover, the area is great for boardsailing, boating, birdwatching, fishing and strolling the boardwalk, with tennis and golf nearby.

Wow Factor: Big-sky country meets big-lake country = stunning natural beauty.

Where It's At: One hour north of Winnipeg on Highway 59. *grandbeachtourism.com*.

ONTARIO

WORLD'S LONGEST FRESHWATER BEACH
WASAGA BEACH, WASAGA BEACH
PROVINCIAL PARK

This popular stretch of shore on Georgian Bay plays host to over two million people each year at its eight beaches. Touted as the world's longest freshwater beach, this 14-km, Blue-Flag-rated spot has great water, sand and sun, and the people-watching will make your head spin. Main beaches one and two are livelier (think lifeguard championships and soap-box derbies), while the rest offer more family-friendly amenities and playgrounds.

Wow Factor: The Annual Beach Cruise, August 19 to 21, when all the Corvette enthusiasts in the province drive in to gush over each other's cars.

Nota Bene: *Jersey Shore* wannabes hang here.

Where It's At: Up the 400 from Toronto, north on Highway 26 from Barrie. *wasagabeach.com*.

ACTION-PACKED PARTY SCENE
SAUBLE BEACH, LAKE HURON

With 11 km of white sand, warm, shallow water and loads of sports, Sauble is one of Ontario's favourite shores. The area scores top points for family-friendliness, with myriad activities including jet skiing, paddle boarding, kitesurfing and canoeing, plus stock-car racing, thrill rides, a classic-car show and metal detectors to rent for beach treasure hunting. Hire a beachfront cottage for maximum exposure.

Wow Factor: Nothing beats this sunset.

Where It's At: Off Highway 6 just past Owen Sound. *saublebeach.com*. ➤



ONTARIO
The Great Lakes provide some of the best sailing, anywhere.

QUEBEC

ISLAND GETAWAY ÎLES DE LA MADELEINE

A chain of islands set in the middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, this whole place is one big, beautiful beach. The 300-km stretch of sand is Quebec's premier spot for kitesurfing, windsurfing, scuba diving and just kicking back. Nearby restaurants have developed "regional tables" using local food products, not to mention fresh lobster, scallops and crab. Try to secure a room at the gorgeous four-star *Domaine du Vieux Couvent*. domaineduvieuxcouvent.com

Wow Factor: Golden sand and jewel-toned surf? It's almost like vacationing much further south.

Nota Bene: Winds and whitecaps mean strong currents, so keep an eye on the weather.

Where It's At: Take the daily ferry from Souris, P.E.I., or hop on a Jazz Air flight from Montreal. tourismeilesdelamadeleine.com

NEW BRUNSWICK

WARMEST SEA PARLEE BEACH, PARLEE BEACH PROVINCIAL PARK, POINTE-DU-CHÊNE

Known for having the warmest salt water north of Virginia (temperatures regularly reach 23 to 25 degrees Celsius), up to half a million people flock to this beach every summer. Throw in festivals, beach volleyball and sand-sculpture competitions, and you've got a beach ball.

Wow Factor: The world's largest lobster (okay, it's a 90-tonne statue) is in Rotary Park.

Nota Bene: Crows can reach 15,000 strong on a hot summer day.

Where It's At: The park is on Route 133 at the Shediac resort area. tourismnewbrunswick.ca

DRAMATIC SCENERY HOPEWELL ROCKS, THE ROCKS PROVINCIAL PARK, HOPEWELL CAPE

These age-old formations, sculpted by the Bay of Fundy tide, do double duty, luring in kayakers to meander around little flowerpot-shaped islands, and then transforming into a beachcombing spot when the tide is out. This area sees the highest tides in the world, up to 14 m.

Wow Factor: In late July, between one and two million shorebirds make this their only pit stop on a 4,000-km migration south.

Where It's At: From Moncton, take Route 114 to Hopewell Cape. thehopewellrocks.ca

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

BEACH RETREAT SINGING SANDS BEACH, BASIN HEAD PROVINCIAL PARK

Is it the perfectly shaped silica sand that makes the "squeaking" sound on these pristine beaches on P.E.I.'s east coast? The jury is still out. Souris has lots of cool places to stay, the refreshing Platter House Ocean Retreat (platterhouse.com) among them. There's lots of great golfing nearby, too. P.E.I. has more than 800 km of beach, but this is our favourite.

Wow Factor: The water is warm (around 21 degrees) and the solitude is serene.

Where It's At: From Charlottetown, head north-east on Highway 2 until it turns into Highway 16 near Souris. tourismpei.com

NOVA SCOTIA

EAST-COAST SURF SPOT LAWRENCETOWN BEACH, LAWRENCETOWN BEACH PROVINCIAL PARK

This tiny beach is only 1.5 km long, but it's 1.5 km of prime, world-renowned surfing breaks. Families, hikers, nature enthusiasts, mountain bikers and bodyboarders all share Lawrencetown Beach, and have a blast doing it. When Haligonians say they're going to the beach, this is what they mean.

Wow Factor: Waves have peaked at four metres.

Nota Bene: Strong currents and riptides, plus the occasional hurricane, make rescues on high surf days quite common. Try not to need one.

Where It's At: 23 km east of Dartmouth on Route 207, 25 minutes from Halifax. lawrencetownbeach.com

HIKER'S HAVEN KEJIMKUJIK SEASIDE, KEJIMKUJIK NATIONAL PARK

Overview: This unspoiled shoreline, an adjunct to the inland national park, has white sand, turquoise waters and great hiking trails. This day park is also a piping plover nesting area. In all, 22 km sq of pristine beauty.

Wow Factor: Adorable seals bask on the rocks!

Where It's At: St. Catherine's River Road, Port Joli. pc.gc.ca/kejimikujik

NEWFOUNDLAND

NATURE LOVERS' ESCAPE SANDBANKS PROVINCIAL PARK, BURGEO

An expansive beachfront makes for great birdwatching (sandpipers and plovers in particular), and rock and forest aren't that far away, in the form of the Annieopsquotch Mountains. The area is both beautiful and secluded. Check out the old cemetery, a reminder that this is where one of the area's first churches stood.

Wow Factor: Intertidal weirdness. At high tide, salt water flows up Grepsy Brook to Heron Pond, and then at low tide, the fresh water flows down the brook to the ocean.

Where It's At: Route 480. newfoundlandandlabrador.com ✨