

To Reach the Park

Whycocomagh Provincial Park is located 0.4 kms (0.2 miles) east of the village of Whycocomagh on Hwy 105 (Trans Canada Hwy) in central Cape Breton Island. It is 120 kms west of Sydney.

Whycocomagh
Provincial Park



RESERVATIONS

1-888-544-3434

9:00 am to 11:00 pm AT (7 days a week)

www.novascotiaparks.ca (24 hours)

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Parks and Recreation Division
Department of Natural Resources
RR # 1, Belmont,
Colchester County,
Nova Scotia, B0M 1C0
(902) 662-3030
www.novascotiaparks.ca

Department of
Natural Resources
PO Box 130
Whycocomagh,
Nova Scotia, B0E 3M0
(902) 756-2339

Whycocomagh Provincial Park
960 Hampton Mountain Road
(902) 756-2448
(mid-June to mid-October)



Photos courtesy Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage.

Whycocomagh Provincial Park

Whycocomagh Provincial Park's dramatic hillside location provides a panoramic view overlooking the Skye River Valley and the beautiful Bras d'Or Lake. Camp at the base of Salt Mountain on land first cleared by Cape Breton's early Scottish settlers. As you marvel at the magnificent scenery, remember to gaze skyward and catch the majesty of a soaring eagle. After all, this is eagle country. Whycocomagh offers quiet camping, picnicking, and hiking opportunities amid this splendor.

Natural History

Bras d'Or Lake – a Cape Breton Treasure

Bras d'Or Lake is actually an inland arm of the Atlantic Ocean that occupies 260 square kilometres (100 sq. mi.) in the centre of the island. The lake has depths exceeding 180 metres (590 ft.) and is underlain by easily eroded gypsum, limestone, salt and shale of the Windsor Group.

The two deep, narrow channels leading into the lake appear to be a consequence of glacial erosion within the last two million years. The channels limit the volume of salt water entering with each tide. Consequently, the tidal range is very small near Whycocomagh and the lake's salinity is one half that of the Atlantic. This enables many shrubs, rushes and sedges not normally found along ocean beaches to grow here. The lake boasts a rich variety of fish offering year round fishing opportunities.

Geology

The valley occupied by the campground sits upon relatively soft, easily erodible sedimentary rocks. Salt Mountain, which rises above the eastern side of the park, derives its name from the salt springs in the area and is composed of erosion – resistant conglomerates such as coarse-grained sandstones and grey to black shales. The hills west of Whycocomagh Bay are based upon by older Precambrian marble, quartzite, amphibolite, schist and gneiss.



The view from Salt Mountain



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Wildlife Cape Breton Island supports the largest concentration of bald eagles (*haliaeetus leucocephalus*) in northeastern North America. Year round, these magnificent birds can be viewed from the park, often capturing

thermals along and above Salt Mountain, to soar high above the lake or perch on trees along the shoreline. Bald eagles are Nova Scotia's largest bird with wing spans as much as 2 metres (6 ft.). Plenty of fish, good nesting opportunities and limited disturbance during nesting season are the main reasons for their abundance.

Cape Breton is also home to moose, whitetail deer, and a variety of small mammals. The park's rural location and natural environment, offers good opportunities to see numerous species in their natural habitat.

Cultural History Whycomomagh – meaning “head of the waters” – is the name given this area by the Mi'kmaq First Nations people. The Mi'kmaq enjoy a thriving community at Waycobah, or We'koqma'q, adjacent to the village of Whycomomagh. Allow time to browse for traditional handcrafts available in local shops, and check to see if your visit coincides with annual cultural events such as powwows.

The first Scottish residents arrived in this area in 1821 as part of a large influx of Highlanders who settled throughout Nova Scotia. The spirit of the founding Scots has been kept alive through Gaelic language, song, dance, traditional Celtic fiddle music – even a Gaelic college. Be sure to enquire about concerts, dances or ceilidhs which take place in many local communities over the summer.

Trails The park's three trails interconnect and provide invigorating hiking through woodland habitat enroute to the summit of Salt Mountain, some 240 metres above sea level.

Follow the yellow markers for **Trail No. 1, The Highlander** (894 m [.5 mi.]) which begins at the parking lot near the administration building. The trail is short, yet steep in places, as it ascends to join the Salt Mountain Trail at 120 m above sea level

Near site # 49 you can begin **Trail No. 2, the Salt Mountain Trail** (1.3 km [0.8 mi.]) which is designated by blue markers. This looped trail provides a steep climb to the top of the mountain. Enjoy three viewpoints at the summit.

For a real workout, join **Trail No. 3, the Scout Trail** (2.0 km [1.2 mi]) at site # 27. Follow the red markers as this steep backcountry trail travels along the valley and then snakes up over rocks and boulders along the slope of the mountain to join the Salt Mountain Trail at the summit. Don't miss the two viewpoints along the mountain ridge. Truly an “eagle's eye” view!

And, don't forget to visit the adjacent day-use park which offers lakeside picnic areas and access to the Bras d'Or Lake.

Area Attractions

A number of Cape Breton Island's famed features are mere day trips away.

- The Cabot Trail, one of Canada's most breathtaking and renowned coastal drives, is accessed just 27 km (17 mi.) from the park.
- In Baddeck (40 km [25 mi.]) visitors will enjoy the Alexander Graham Bell Museum. The noted inventor spent the last 37 years of his life at his estate – Beinn Bhreath.
- Let yourself be transported back to the days of the early settlers at the Highland Village, a living museum in Iona.

- Anglers will want to check out the pristine waters of Lake Ainslie and the Margaree River, famous for trout and Atlantic Salmon. The Margaree is one of Canada's Heritage Rivers.
- Stroll along sandy shores at nearby Inverness, Port Hood, and West Mabou Beach provincial parks – all within a 35 km (22 mi.) or less drive.
- For information on these and other attractions please consult the Nova Scotia Doers and Dreamers Guide, visit a Visitor Information Centre or the website at www.novascotia.com

Cabot Trail

Whycomomagh Provincial Park

- P** Parking
- O** Park Office
- W** Washrooms and Showers
- V** Vault Toilets
- Pl** Playground
- Pa** Picnic Area
- Wt** Walking Trail
- L** Lookoff
- Ca** Campground (62 sites)

- GC** Group Campsite (includes fire grill; site available by reservation)
- W** Water
- F** Firewood
- C** Convenience (Dishwashing and Laundry)
- DS** Dumping Station
- Park Boundary



A Special Message to Park Visitors

PARK SAFETY

- Help preserve and protect this beautiful park for the enjoyment of future generations. Plants, animals and rocks are an important part of its natural heritage. Please do not damage or remove them.
- Please keep pets on a leash at all times.
- Firearms are prohibited in the park.

PERSONAL SAFETY

- Please practice safe swimming as the beach is unsupervised.
- Wear hiking boots or other sturdy footwear if you plan to hike the trails.
- Approach cliffs at designated viewing station only and remain behind the security barriers at all times.
- Contact park staff for further information about the park. They want to make your visit as enjoyable as possible.

