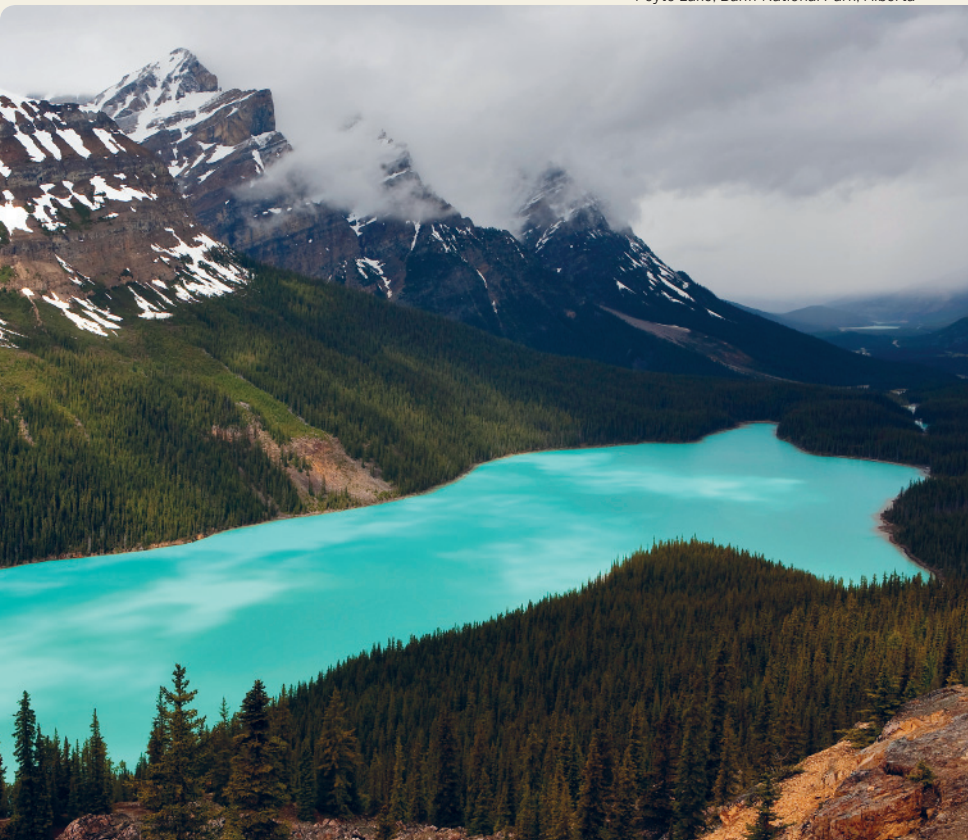


National Parks

While other countries flaunt medieval castles or ancient Hellenic ruins, Canada has its own 'great wonder': the world's first National Parks Service. Created with the aim of balancing ecological integrity with the right of access and recreation for all, this evolving organization, which numbered six parks at its inception in 1911, has multiplied sevenfold to provide a protective umbrella for 42 natural enclaves with a combined area the size of Italy.

Peyto Lake, Banff National Park, Alberta



Top 5 Parks for History

Long at the forefront of global environmental protection, Canada endowed the world with its third national park – Banff – in 1885 along with numerous other pioneering areas: Yoho, Jasper and Waterton, to name but three. Paradoxically, it is often the country's newer parks that harbor its oldest archeological remains.

Gwaii Haanas

1 Canada's most advanced and best preserved First Nations culture survives on BC's Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands; p753). It has protected its heritage in a scattering of abandoned villages, craning totem poles and excavated archeological sites.

Banff

2 Predated only by Yellowstone in the USA and Royal National Parks in Australia, Banff's (p584) history is entwined with the history of the national park movement and the pioneering railways that helped pave its way.

Ukkusiksalik

3 One of Canada's newest parks (p821; inaugurated in 2003) is also one of its most interesting with over 500 archeological sites showcasing the development of Inuit culture from the 11th century to the 1960s.

Jasper

4 Harking back to the early 20th century, Jasper's Yellowhead Museum (p606) exhibits the exploits of European explorers, fur trading posts, and a cross-continental railroad.

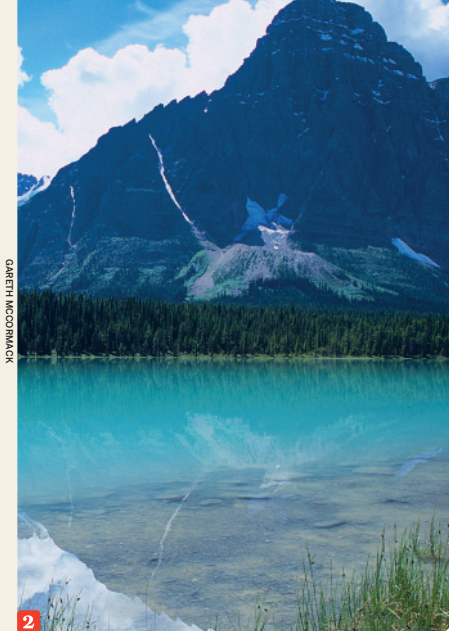
Terra Nova

5 Don't expect historical Rome, but Newfoundland's gift to the park system (p475) hides interesting early-20th-century settlement history with remnants of sawmills, shipbuilding and residential quarters evident on a coastal trail contouring Newport Sound.

Right

2. Mt Chephren, Banff National Park, Alberta

3. Sila River, Ukkusiksalik National Park, Nunavut



GARETH MCCORMACK



FIRST LIGHT