



Prince Edward Island

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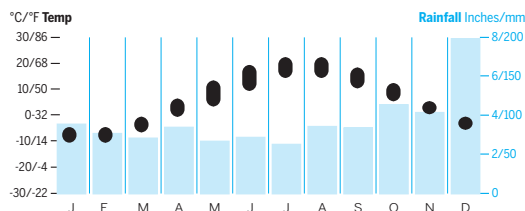
Why Go?

Move over Mounties, Canada's got a spunky, red-headed feminine side. In Prince Edward Island (PEI) little Anne Shirley, Lucy Maud Montgomery's immortal heroine of the *Anne of Green Gables* series, is larger than her fictional bristles. Ironically, the island itself is a red-head – from tip to tip sienna-colored soil peeks out from under potato plants, and the shores are lined with rose and golden sand. Meanwhile the Green Gables-esque landscape is a pastoral green patchwork of rolling fields, tidy gabled farmhouses and seaside villages.

Yet despite the pervasive splendor of the province, the first thing most visitors notice, and fall in love with, is PEI's charm and relaxed atmosphere. The 'Gentle Island' really lives up to its nickname and the least authentic things you'll find here are the orange nylon braids of little girls in tourist spots dressed up as 'Anne.'

When to Go

Charlottetown



June Enjoy the spring calm before the crowds hit; the rolling hillsides are abloom with wildflowers.

July & August The entire island is in festival mode with live music and lobster suppers nightly.

September Traditional music, food mark Charlottetown's PEI International Shellfish Festival.

PEI FAST FACTS

- » Population: 141,000
- » Area: 5700 sq km
- » Capital: Charlottetown
- » Quirky fact: Kilos of potatoes produced per year: 1.3 billion

Local Culture

The defining feature of island culture is its rural roots – most islanders are just one or two generations removed from the family farm or fishing boat, or are still there working it. There are descendants of the original Mi'kmaq population and small pockets of French-speaking Acadians in the eastern and western parts of the province. Most islanders, however, trace their heritage to the British Isles.

History

Its Aboriginal inhabitants, the Mi'kmaq, knew the island as Abegweit – 'Land Cradled on the Waves.' Although Jacques Cartier of France first recorded PEI's existence in 1534, settlement didn't begin until 1603. Initially small, the French colony grew only after Britain's expulsion of the Acadians from Nova Scotia in the 1750s. In 1758 the British took the island, known then as Île St Jean, and expelled the 3000 Acadians. Britain was officially granted the island in the Treaty of Paris of 1763.

To encourage settlement, the British divided the island into 67 lots and held a lottery to give away the land. Unfortunately, most of the 'Great Giveaway' winners were speculators and did nothing to settle or develop the island. The questionable actions of these absentee landlords hindered population growth and caused incredible unrest among islanders.

One of the major reasons PEI did not become part of Canada in 1867 was because union did not offer a solution to the land problem. In 1873 the Compulsory Land Purchase Act forced the sale of absentee landlords' land and cleared the way for PEI to join Canada later that year. But foreign land ownership is still a sensitive issue in the province. The population has remained stable, at around 140,000, since the 1930s.

In 1997, after much debate, PEI was linked to New Brunswick and the main-

land by the Confederation Bridge – at almost 13km, it's the world's longest artificial bridge over ice-covered waters.

Land & Climate

PEI stretches 224km tip to tip; it's 6km wide at its narrowest point, and 64km at its widest. The island is a low-lying hump of iron-rich red sandstone and earth. Its highest point rises 152m above sea level, at Springton – smack dab in the middle of the province.

July and August are the warmest and driest months. In winter the snow can be meters deep, but it rarely hinders the major roadways. The last of the white stuff is usually gone by May.

i Getting There & Around

Apart from a couple of shuttle services (see p424), there is no intra-island public transportation.

AIR

Charlottetown's airport is 8km from town and serves all flights entering and leaving the province.

Air Canada has daily flights to Charlottetown from Halifax and Toronto, and from Montréal in the high season (June to September). WestJet offers direct flights to Charlottetown from Toronto and Montréal. From June to September, Northwestern Airlines and Delta Airlines each run one daily direct flight to Charlottetown from Detroit and Boston, respectively. See p880 for these airlines' contact details. **Sunwing** (☎877-786-9464; www.flysunwing.com) flies from Toronto during the summer.

BICYCLE

Cyclists and pedestrians are banned from the Confederation Bridge (see p424) and must use the 24-hour, demand-driven shuttle service (bicycle/pedestrian \$8/4). On the PEI side, go to the bridge operations building at Gateway Village in Borden-Carleton; on the New Brunswick side, the pickup is at the Cape Jourimain Nature Centre at exit 51 on Rte 16 (p413).

While your easiest option to get around the island is by car, bicycle is also a fine choice. The flat and well-maintained Confederation Trail (see the boxed text, p431) runs the length of the island through some beautiful countryside and small towns.

BOAT

Northumberland Ferries (☎902-566-3838, 888-249-7245; www.peiferry.com) runs the ferry service that links PEI's Wood Islands to Caribou, Nova Scotia, from May to December. There are up to nine daily sailings in each direction during the summer, and five in the fall and spring