

**Bruce Peninsula
National Park of Canada
Fathom Five
National Marine Park of Canada**



Location

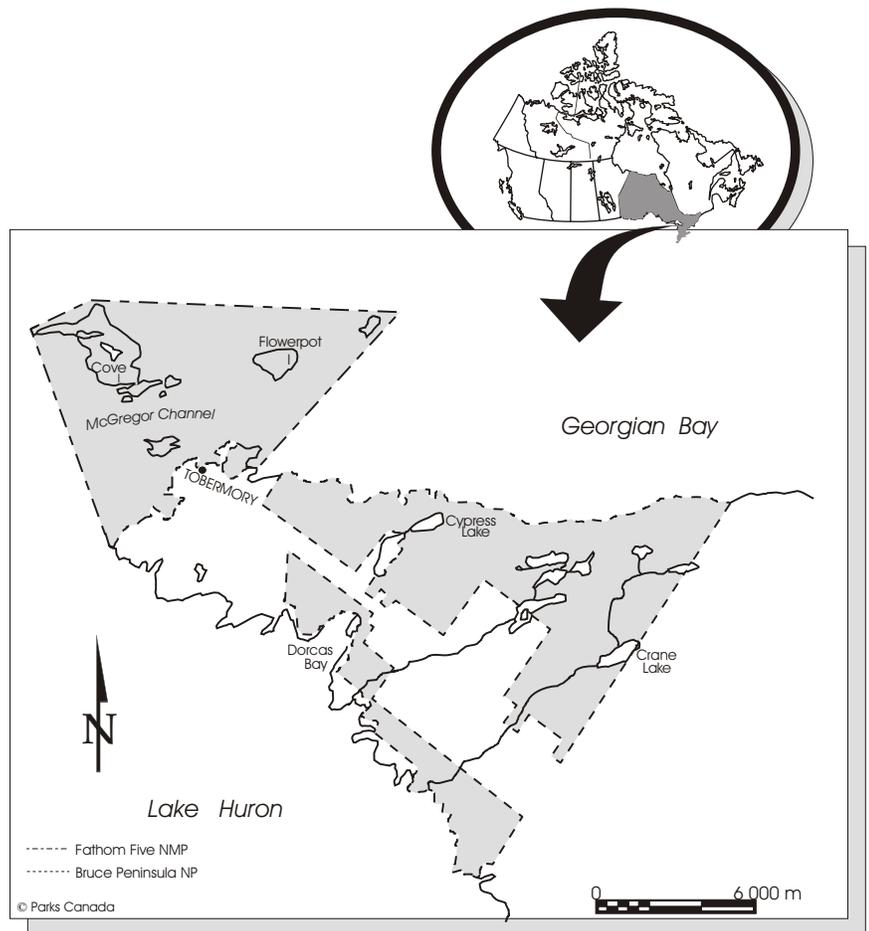
The Bruce Peninsula and Fathom Five are located in southwestern Ontario, separating Georgian Bay from the Lake Huron basin. Both parks are at the tip of the peninsula, and are 154 km² (Bruce) and 113 km² (Fathom Five) in size. Established in 1987, the parks represent Canada's Western St. Lawrence Lowlands Natural Region and Georgian Bay Marine Region. The town of Tobermory, where the parks' operations are based, is approximately 300 km northwest of Toronto. Bruce Peninsula National Park is located in the Mixedwood Plains Ecozone.

Climate

The climatic conditions in the area of the peninsula are among the most temperate in Canada. Temperatures in the summer months (June-August) average 16.8°C daily. Yearly precipitation amounts to almost 900 mm, and can include heavy spring rains and snowfall. Both Georgian Bay and Lake Huron moderate the peninsula's climate. Summer storms can be fierce, a fact attested to by the large number of shipwrecks within Fathom Five.

Geology

The Bruce Peninsula is actually an 80 km finger of limestone. Blocks of dolomite in the rough farmlands are a reminder that this whole area is a table of rock, slanting gently from east to west. The Niagara Escarpment, with its rugged limestone walls reaching up to 100 m high, dominates the park. It winds its way across southern Ontario and heads up the Georgian Bay side of the peninsula. The Escarpment is the edge of a giant 'saucer' that dips to its centre in Michigan. It had its origins in shallow seas 420 million years ago, and the rocks of the Bruce contain fossils of dozens of marine life-forms. The Escarpment submerges in Georgian Bay and reappears as islands in Fathom Five, where water has carved the famous flowerpot formations. Boulders, and thick deposits of till reflect past glacial activity.



Vegetation

In both parks, mixed woodlots and various wetlands mix with the temperate climate to produce a large variety of vegetation. Over 34 species of orchids can be found, including *Habenaria leucophaea*, one of the rarest in North America. There are also about 32 species of ferns and several species of insect-eating plants. Forest cover is relatively young, replacing the original forests lost mainly to logging in the late 1800's and fire. Very few old-growth pines are left, and the forest cover is chiefly a mixture of cedar, spruce, fir, birch, poplar, maple and beech. Everywhere along the shores of the peninsula are twisted ancient Eastern white cedars, which grow on the dolomite cliffs.

Wildlife

In terms of wildlife, the region is one of the most diverse in Canada. Mammal species include deer, beaver, fox, and bear. More than 300 species of birds have been recorded. There are also many reptiles. The park protects a number of threatened Massassauga rattlesnakes. This timid snake rarely comes near people, preferring undisturbed marshy areas. It is not wise to provoke the rattler; its venom is poisonous and potentially dangerous. Life is less obvious in Lake Huron, however it supports crayfish, sculpins, pike, perch and other fish.



Activities

On the Bruce, the waters of the Great Lakes combine with the escarpment to create some of Ontario's finest scenery, including rugged limestone cliffs, caves, mixed forests, and beaches. Bruce Peninsula National Park offers splendid hiking: the most rugged parts of the 782 km Bruce Trail pass through the park. The Trail stretches along the Escarpment from Queenston to Tobermory. Other trails are found at Horse Lake, Marr Lake, and along Georgian Bay. Boating visitors can also hike on Flowerpot Island. Park staff and the Friends of the park offer many programs for visitors, including amphitheatre presentations and both daily and sunset hikes. Both Cyprus Lake and Dorcas Bay have sand beaches and offer good (but unsupervised) swimming. Four campgrounds offer over 200 sites for tents and trailers. In the winter, there is cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. A provincial ferry service runs between Tobermory and Manitoulin Island.

Fathom Five

Fathom Five, Canada's first marine park, contains 21 shipwrecks, a major attraction for divers and snorkellers. Local captains offer cruises including glass-bottom boat tours, and diving excursions.

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