

## Georgian Bay Islands National Park of Canada

### Climate

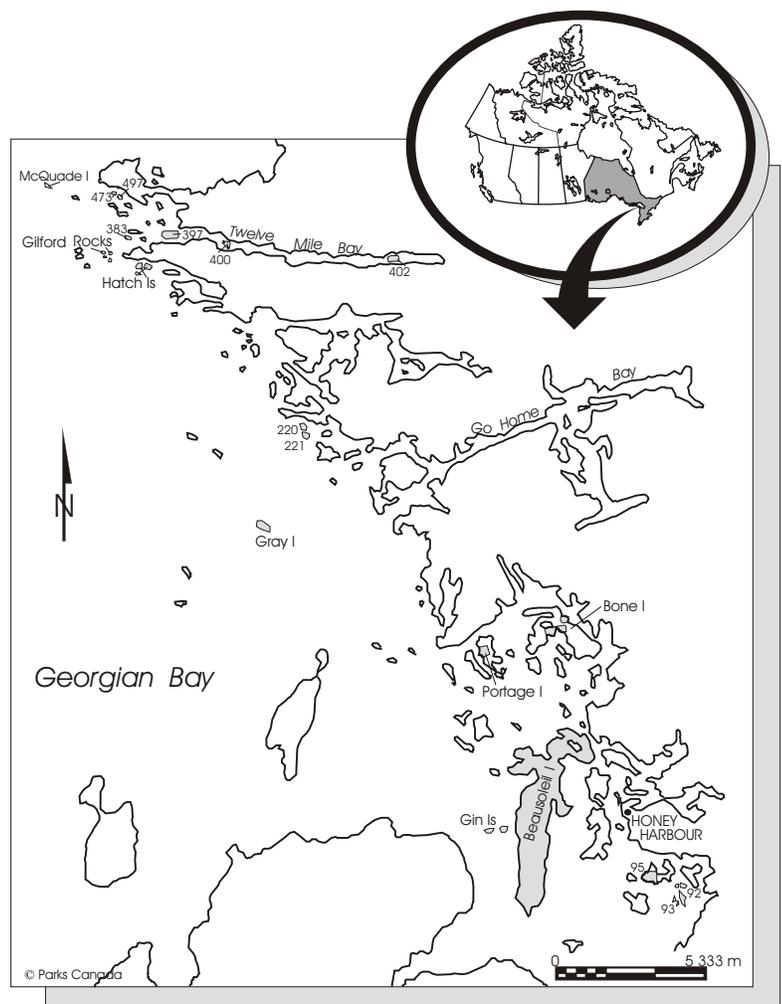
Georgian Bay Islands National Park has a moderated climate because of its location on the Great Lakes basin. There are marked temperature extremes, but no extended wet or dry spells. Annual precipitation amounts to about 900 mm. The climate is influenced by a number of air masses, including the Pacific, Arctic, Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic.

### Geology

Eastern Georgian Bay is part of the southwestern edge of the Canadian Shield, an expanse of granitic bedrock that stretches from the Yukon to Labrador. The park area, like all of Ontario, was heavily glaciated, and the scouring effects of the ice sheets are evident in the rounded tops of granite that rise out of the water to become the islands of Georgian Bay. There are also many sheltered coves, rocky points, and both sand and cobble beaches. Soils have been slow to develop on the open rock faces, steadily being eroded away by wind and water. Their shallowness does not allow trees to acquire particularly good anchorage. However, a lush deciduous forest, growing on a base of sandy soil and sedimentary rock, covers the southern portion of Beausoleil Island.

### Location

Georgian Bay Islands National Park is situated in the world's largest freshwater archipelago, known as the "Thirty Thousand Islands", along Georgian Bay's eastern shoreline. The park consists of 59 islands (or parts of islands) with a total area of approximately 13 km<sup>2</sup>. Its largest holding is Beausoleil Island, and a mainland base is located at Honey Harbour, about 150 km north of Toronto off Highway 400. A new park administration office opened in Midland in 2004. Georgian Bay Islands National Park was formally established in 1929. Its properties span two of Canada's natural regions: the West St. Lawrence Lowlands Region, and the Central Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Precambrian Region. Georgian Bay Islands National Park is located in the Mixedwood Plains Ecozone and borders onto the Boreal Shield Ecozone.



## History

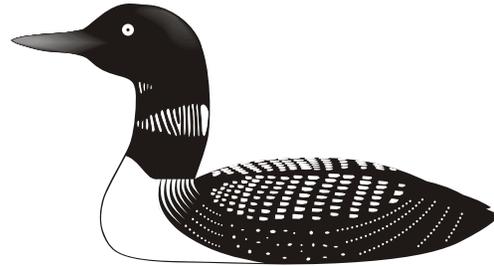
The southeastern shore of Georgian Bay is rich with Aboriginal history and culture. Archaeological investigations indicate thousands of years of human use on Beausoleil Island. Remains of a settlement from the 1830's are still evident including a cemetery.

## Vegetation

The park's plant life reflects a broad transition zone between northern and southern forest communities. The forest cover is a mix of more southerly deciduous species, like ash and maple, and more northerly species like hemlock and spruce. Rich hardwood forests at the southern end of Beausoleil Island are a sharp contrast to the northern park islands where barren rock outcrops are topped with windswept white pines. It was these pines that inspired many Group of Seven paintings. Hardy grasses, lichens, and shrubs can be found in the depressions of these rock outcrops, while the moister, richer soils of the mixedwood forests allow more mosses, ferns, and wildflowers to grow.

## Wildlife

The islands of Georgian Bay are renowned for their diversity of reptiles and amphibians. With over 33 species, it has more of these cold-blooded creatures than any other national park in Canada. The park's population of reclusive Massasauga rattlesnakes, a threatened species, is of particular concern. Visitors are advised to leave this venomous snake alone, but report any sightings to park staff. Many bird species are also found in the park, both along the shorelines and in the forests. Fortunate park visitors will catch a glimpse of the great blue heron, a magnificent bird found in this area.



## Activities

By virtue of being a collection of islands, access to the park is exclusively by boat. The park has about 160 campsites in 11 campgrounds. There are also two group campsites for groups of 30 people or less. All campsites are on Beausoleil Island. Cedar Spring, the largest campground with 87 sites, offers showers and flush toilets. There are docking areas for boaters, and day-use areas for picnics and swimming. Visitors to the park can also enjoy boating, canoeing, and hiking (watercraft cannot be rented at the park). Winter activities are dependent upon safe ice conditions (usually from mid-January to early March). Visitors can ski, camp, and snowshoe on Beausoleil Island. Interpretive staff offers programs throughout the summer and curriculum-linked school programs are also available during the off-season. It is recommended that boaters have the appropriate nautical charts for Georgian Bay before embarking on any excursions to the islands. During the summer months, visitors without a boat can board the Georgian Bay Islands National Park "Day Tripper". This boat brings visitors to Beausoleil Island for a half-day adventure in Canada's smallest national park.

For more information, contact:  
Georgian Bay Islands National Park  
Box 9  
Midland, Ontario L4R 4K6  
Telephone: (705) 526-9804  
Fax: (705) 526-5939  
Website: [www.pc.gc.ca/georgianbay](http://www.pc.gc.ca/georgianbay)