

# Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve of Canada Pronounced "Main-gaw"

## Climate

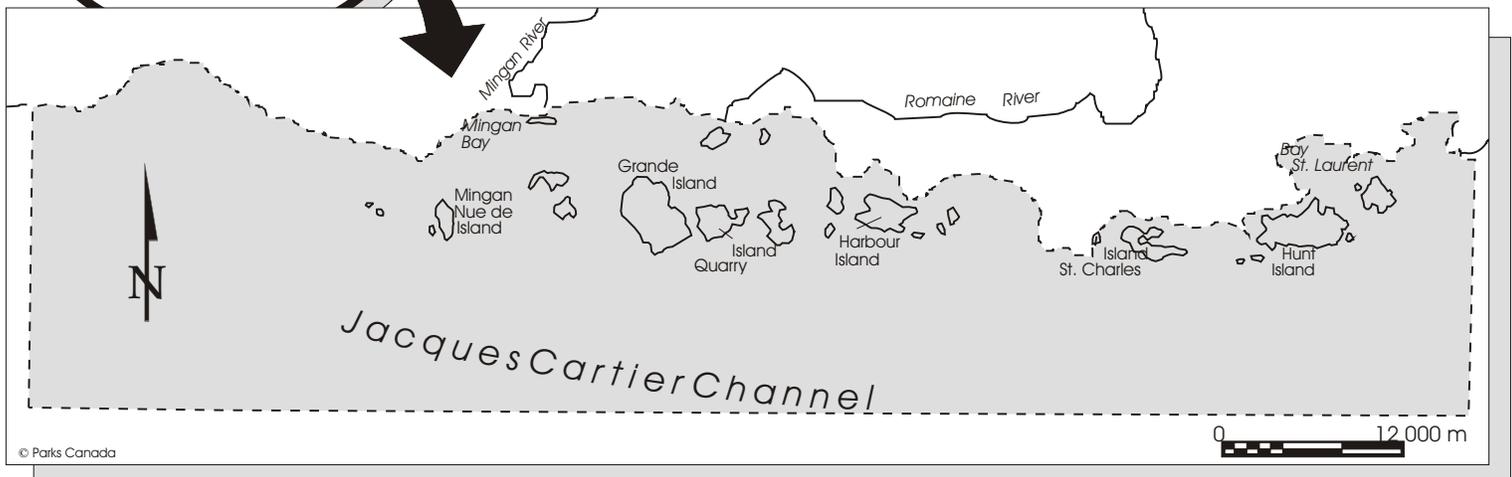
The Mingan region has a temperate maritime climate, characterized by relatively cool summers and long winters. High atmospheric humidity causes frequent fog. Cold currents from Labrador exert their influence on the area, as do the shifting seaward and landward air masses. Temperatures are generally higher than those further inland, with an average July temperature of 14.5°C. Long winters contrast with variable summer conditions, with periods of fog or rain alternating with long, hot, sunny periods. As a result of the long winters, the growing season is quite short.

## Geology

The Archipelago is composed of sedimentary bedrock that appears as monoliths, rock arches, grottoes, flowerpots, and colonnades. The main rock types are dolomite, limestone, shale, and some sandstone. Ordovician fossils can be found amidst the layers of rock. Over 100 types of fossilized life forms have been identified. Past glacial movement and ever-present marine erosion are responsible for much of the park's landscape character. The islands themselves are essentially a series of plateaus of varying sizes and shapes. Evidence of former sea levels appears as beaches, benches, taluses, terraces and cliffs.

## Location

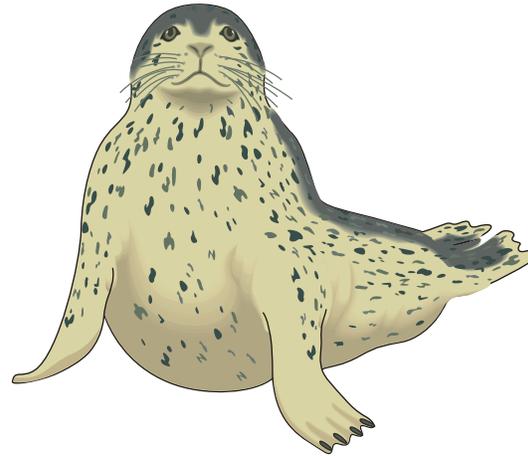
The Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve is located in northeastern Québec and consists of some 40 islands and more than 2 000 islets and reefs. The islands are about 3.5 km from shore, and are spread out over some 175 km. The total area of the Archipelago is about 151 km<sup>2</sup>. Created in 1984, the Mingan Archipelago protects a representative area of the Eastern St. Lawrence Lowlands natural region. Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve is located in the Boreal Shield ecozone.



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## **Vegetation**

Close to 62% of the park reserve is covered by forest. The rest is composed of peat bogs, moorland, cliffs, and shoreline. The main environmental factors affecting the plant life in the islands are the maritime climate and limestone bedrock. There are over 500 species of vascular plants, 150 species of mosses, and 190 species of lichen in the park. At least 18 plant species are considered rare, two of the best known being Mingan thistle and white lady's slipper. The forests are composed primarily of white spruce. Both freshwater and saltwater marshes are also found in the park.



## **Wildlife**

The Archipelago is particularly important to birds. Some 200 species can be observed in the park, including puffins, small penguins, terns, gulls, cormorants, razorbills, guillemots, and eider ducks. About 75 000 eiders use the park as an overwintering area. Beginning in July, hundreds of migrating shorebirds like sandpipers and plovers move through the park. Mammals are less abundant, largely due to the relative inaccessibility of the islands. Snowshoe hares are fairly abundant, while beaver, red fox, and red squirrels can also be found. Islands connected by ice bridges see the occasional black bear or moose. Marine mammals in the surrounding waters include nine species of whales (most readily observed from August to December), and grey, harbour, and harp seals.

## **Activities**

The Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve is located roughly 900 km east of Québec City and is accessible by car or plane. The islands themselves can only be reached by boat. Camping is restricted to Parks Canada campsites. Boating, kayaking, scuba diving, and fishing are the most popular water activities. Land-based recreational activities include walking, hiking, picnicking, and bird-watching. Some hiking facilities are accessible to visitors with disabilities. There are two Visitor Centres that provide information about the park, as well as regular interpretive programs such as discussion groups, boat cruises, and guided hikes.

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