

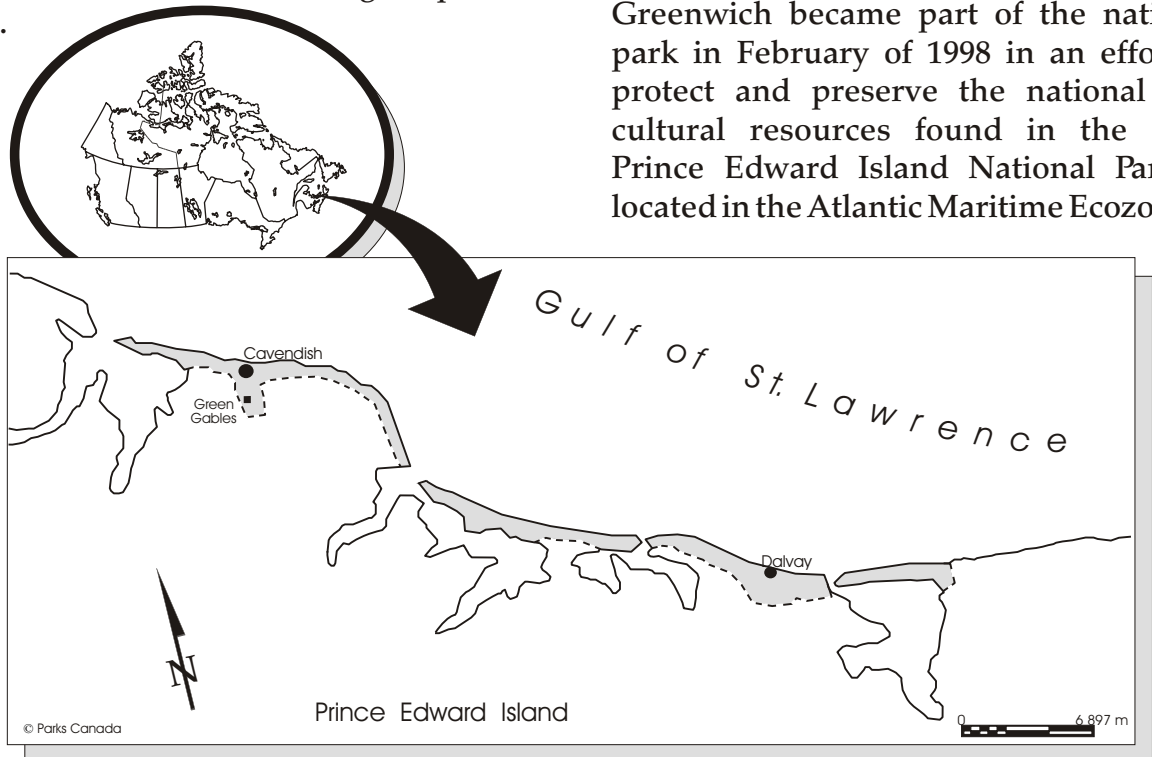
# Prince Edward Island National Park of Canada

## Climate

The island, not surprisingly, has a maritime climate with moderate temperatures, though the area is not entirely without the influence of inland features like prevailing westerly winds. These winds offset the influence of the sea, and cause temperatures to fluctuate more widely than normal. Moisture is not a problem here: the area receives over 1 000 mm of precipitation annually.

## Geology

Prince Edward Island is a collection of sand and mud that was deposited by a large prehistoric ocean basin. Much of this material now exists as sandstone bedrock. Common formations in the park include barrier spits, sand beaches, coastal dunes, and red sandstone cliffs that are forever being shaped by the waves.



## Location

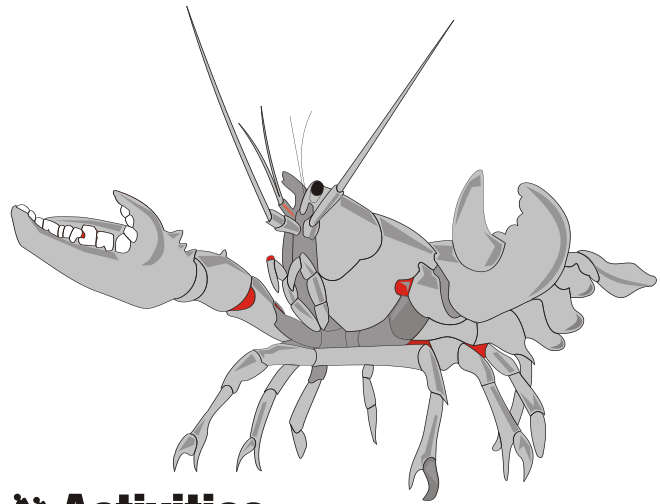
Prince Edward Island National Park, with an area of approximately 37 km<sup>2</sup>, is one of the smallest national parks in the system. Located on the gulf side of the province, the park extends along over 47 km of coastline. The central area of the park is about 24 km north of Charlottetown. This was a fashionable vacation area in the late 19th century, and was established as a park in 1937. Prince Edward Island National Park protects a representative sample of the Maritime Plain Natural Region. One of the park's cultural landmarks is Green Gables, a special heritage place commemorating Lucy Maud Montgomery as a person of national historic significance. The fictional setting in the classic tale *“Anne of Green Gables”* was inspired by this farm site, once owned by cousins of Montgomery's grandfather. Greenwich, located on the eastern side of St. Peter's Bay, is the newest addition to Prince Edward Island National Park. Greenwich became part of the national park in February of 1998 in an effort to protect and preserve the national and cultural resources found in the area. Prince Edward Island National Park is located in the Atlantic Maritime Ecozone.

## Vegetation

Very little of the region's forests remain. The towering white pines that originally dominated the area were largely harvested by the end of the 18th century. Much of the remaining mixed forest of maple, beech, elm, ash, birch, pine, and hemlock was cleared for farms long ago. The park's dune areas are sparsely vegetated on the seaward side and more heavily vegetated behind the primary dunes. Marram grass, which grows in abundance here, is the main plant that can initially colonize the dunes. The grass' roots help to stabilize the constantly shifting sand so that other species such as wild rose, bayberry and seaside goldenrod can become established. Freshwater and saltwater marshes, along with warm lagoons, add even more diversity to the area's plant life.

## Wildlife

The park has mostly small mammals like raccoons, skunks, mink, weasel, muskrats, squirrels, and chipmunks. The eastern coyote is the largest land mammal in the area. Grey seals and harbour seals frequent coastal areas. The park's numerous wetlands provide habitat and nesting sites for many species of waterfowl and other water-based birds. The park's most significant species is the endangered piping plover which nests along sandy beaches. Altogether there are over 300 species of birds that have been recorded here including horned larks, common and arctic terns, osprey, guillemots, teals, sparrows, warblers and the Great Blue Heron, which is the park's symbol.



## Activities

Activities include hiking, bird watching, canoeing, windsurfing, and camping. The park offers three campgrounds with 570 sites. Signs along hiking trails provide interpretive information, and a variety of interpretive programs are available. A new Interpretation Centre at Greenwich, Prince Edward Island National Park, offers visitors an exciting and interactive learning experience. Green Gables, Covehead Lighthouse and Dalvay-by-the-Sea National Historic Site are popular places to visit as well.

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