



# Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive

## Finest Boating in the World

Welcome to Cape Breton's rolling heartland, where the highlands meet the lowlands along the shores of the island's beautiful inland sea—the Bras d'Or Lakes. The Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive circles the lake along shoreline roads that offer an ever-changing panorama of woodlands, farms and villages, and are ideal for walking, biking and birdwatching. The region is a major nesting area for bald eagles, and these impressive birds can often be seen soaring aloft or perched on shoreline trees.

There's something new around every corner along this route. Experience the daily life of the early Scottish settlers at the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum. At Marble Mountain Museum you can learn about marble quarrying in the late 1800s, and the Orangedale Railway Station Museum offers a special look at late 19th-century trains and train travel.

Known for gentle, fog-free waters, beautiful anchorages, and hundreds of coves and islands, the lakes are an international cruising destination, attracting hundreds of boating enthusiasts every year. Visitors who want to get out on the water will find numerous boat tours available, from seabird tours and ecological sailing tours to elegant cruises.

The Bras d'Or Lakes' unique tidal waters create a rich ecosystem that supports a dazzling array of wildlife. Hundreds of pairs of bald eagles nest along the lake shore and in the surrounding countryside. White-tailed deer, osprey, foxes, and raccoons are also frequently seen.

### Visitor Information Centres

Baddeck E15, 295-1911

Chéticamp B14, 224-2642

Inverness D13, 258-3740

Little Narrows E14, 756-2413

Louisbourg E17, 733-2720

Margaree Forks D14, 248-2803

North Sydney D16, 794-7719

✉ Port Hastings F13, 625-4201

Port Hood E13, 787-2521

St Peter's F14, 535-2185

Sydney E16, 539-9876

*Most Visitor Information Centres are open mid-May to mid-October (subject to change). Call the above numbers or 1-800-565-0000.*

✉ Provincial Visitor Information Centre

[cbisland.com](http://cbisland.com)

The Highland Village Museum has a breathtaking view overlooking the Barra Strait.



The Bras d'Or Lakes are a traditional home of Nova Scotia's native Mi'kmaq, and the Mi'kmaq language and culture are still evident today in the four reserves along its shores: Waycobah, Eskasoni (the largest reserve in the province), Wagmatcook, and Chapel Island in St. Peter's Inlet. Wagmatcook First Nation has a Mi'kmaq cultural and heritage centre, with a museum, exhibits, craft shop and restaurant (see p. 337).



Many pairs of Bald Eagles call the Bras d'Or Lakes home



Mi'kmaq culture has a rich history in Cape Breton.



From the Canso Causeway, take Highway 105 towards the centre of Cape Breton. Visit the Father John Angus Rankin Cultural Centre in **Glendale** and discover the story behind the resurgence of traditional Scottish music in Cape Breton (see p. 337). At **Iron Mines** turn right to **Orangedale**, an attractive lakeside community where the Orangedale Railway Station Museum, a classic station built in 1886, displays memorabilia and railway cars from that era. The living quarters of the stationmaster and his family, on the upper floor of the station, have been restored as at the turn of the century (see p. 337).

From the railway museum, retrace your route through the village and turn left to go to Marble Mountain. After Crowdis Bridge, which crosses River Denys, turn left on the gravel road that follows the shoreline. This route is marked by numerous bays and quiet coves that are an important habitat for herons, ospreys, bald eagles and many varieties of ducks and other waterfowl. Sea kayaking among the islands and beautiful inlets of this region is a popular activity.

**Marble Mountain** is a small picturesque village that perches high above Clark Cove on the Bras d'Or Lakes, offering splendid views of the southern end of the lake and the many islands that lie just offshore. A museum details the fascinating history of the village and the nearby marble quarry (see p. 337), and there is a unique marble-chip beach.

Approaching **Dundee**, the road offers sweeping views of the coastline and the island-dotted waters of the lake, passing a small marina nestled in a picturesque cove, then crossing a one-lane bridge. Beyond the bridge are resorts and one of Cape Breton's finest 18-hole golf courses.

From Dundee, the Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive curves along the shore of West Bay, offering splendid views of the lake and its forested shoreline. There are several pioneer cemeteries along this road; watch for signs.

Known as the "Gateway to the Bras d'Or Lakes," **St. Peter's** is a full-service community situated on a narrow strip of land separating the Atlantic Ocean and the Bras d'Or Lakes. The St. Peter's Canal, a National Historic Site, connects these two great bodies of water. It is flanked on both sides by grassy picnic areas that offer a great place to sit and watch the parade of colourful boats travelling to and from the popular cruising waters of the Bras d'Or Lakes. On the east side of the canal is Battery Provincial Park, where walking trails to the St. Peter's Lighthouse offer excellent views along the coast. On the west side of the canal, the Nicolas Denys Museum highlights the region's his-

tory and tells the story of the adventurous pioneer who established the first trading post in the region here, in 1650 (see p. 337).

St. Peter's is also the birthplace of photographer Wallace MacAskill, whose photographs of sailing ships and coastal life of Nova Scotia garnered him international recognition. His childhood home (c. 1880) on the main street has been restored and converted to a summer museum that displays many of his original hand-tinted prints (see p. 337).



Just past St. Peter's is **Chapel Island First Nations Reserve**, one of the oldest Mi'kmaq settlements in the province. The route continues along the lake shore, passing through a patchwork quilt of rolling green farmlands and small communities.

Continuing past **Irish Cove**, the Bras d'Or Lookoff and Picnic Park is a good spot to stop and enjoy spectacular views of the lakes and surrounding hills.

Further along, **Big Pond** is best known as the home of Rita MacNeil, acclaimed singer, songwriter and recording artist. Rita's Tea Room offers tea and light dining, and contains a heart-warming collection of awards, photographs and memorabilia from the singer's distinguished career (see p. 337).

At **Ben Eoin**, there is an attractive provincial picnic park with a short trail to a lookoff that offers sweeping views of the lake. The route continues to the charming community of **East Bay**, nestled into the hillside at the tip of the bay that shares its name. Near the lovely St. Mary's Church, built in 1837, a 1.5-km (1-mi.) long road crosses the bay on the narrow East Bay Sandbar, which is an excellent place for swimming, walking and birdwatching.

The Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive continues around the head of East Bay to **Northside East Bay** and **Eskasoni**, Nova Scotia's largest Mi'kmaq reserve. The name Eskasoni is derived from a Mi'kmaq word meaning "still water". From Eskasoni, the road follows the coastline to a small warm-water beach at Banacadie Pond, then turns inland to **Grand Narrows**, where you will find accommodations, services, a farmers' market and a full-service marina. A bridge crosses the Barra Strait to the Washabuck Peninsula.

Almost entirely surrounded by water, the Washabuck Peninsula's high rolling hills and quiet coastal roads offer some of the most captivating scenery to be found anywhere along the Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive.

After crossing the Barra Strait Bridge, a left turn leads to **Iona** and the Highland Village Museum, a living museum that recreates the 200-year history of Scottish settlement in Cape Breton. Inside the 43-acre





A sailing tour of the lakes is a must.



Step back in time in the Taigh Dubh at the Highland Village Museum.



Reflections on the beautiful Bras d'Or

Approx. touring distances along scenic route:

- Baddeck-Whycocomagh 30 km
- Whycocomagh-St. Peter's 100 km
- St. Peter's-East Bay 68 km
- East Bay-Iona 48 km
- Iona-Baddeck 125 km



## Don't Miss!

### Big Pond Festival

Burn the soles off your shoes at this popular Cape Breton ceilidh!

### St. Peter's Canal

Witness the manoeuvres of the tidal locks at the lovely "gateway to the Bras d'Or."

### Sailing

Cruise amid ideal conditions and unrivalled scenic beauty.

### Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum

Experience the lifestyle of the Highland Scots in Cape Breton.

### Eagles

Watch for bald eagles in flight or at rest perched in shoreline trees on the Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive.



Sunset on the Baddeck Lighthouse



## Experience living history on the Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive

"Gaelic culture is a living culture. Language, singing, musical forms and storytelling all give you a sense of the richness of our culture. From 1780 to 1840, there were somewhere in the vicinity of 30,000 to 50,000 Gaelic-speaking Scots from the Highlands and Isles of Scotland, and they brought with them their language, their kinship systems, their whole lifestyle. If you want to get a sense of your Gaelic roots, this is the place to come—you can really see how the lifestyle has changed over the last 140 years. Come and visit us, and we'll share with you and help you experience authentic Gaelic life. It's who we are here."

– Rodney Chaisson

Director, Highland Village

Visit [novascotia.com](http://novascotia.com) to watch videos of this and other exciting Nova Scotia experiences.



village, ten restored historic buildings reflect various periods of the history of Scottish settlers and communities (see p. 337). Set high on a hillside, the village also provides panoramic views of the Bras d'Or Lakes and surrounding countryside.

Turn left back through Iona to MacCormack Provincial Picnic Park, which offers walking trails and a relaxing place to enjoy the beautiful surroundings. The road winds along the eastern shore of the peninsula, with ever-changing views of the rolling, emerald-green highlands and the island-dotted waters of the lakes.

The geology of Washabuck Peninsula is unique. In places, chalk-white coastal bluffs have been sculpted by wind and tide into pleasing rounded shapes. These are outcroppings of high-grade gypsum. Near Little Narrows is a mine that produces over 1 million tonnes of the soft white mineral every year.

**OFF TRAIL** ▶ In **Little Narrows**, a 24-hour car ferry (\$5, STC) crosses the St. Patrick's Channel to Highway 105, which leads east to Baddeck or west to the Canso Causeway.

**223** Near **Jamesville**, a turnoff leads to Highland Hill Forest Management and Recreation Area where 9 km (5.5 mi.) of moderately challenging hiking trails lead through 1400 acres of privately owned upland forest.

The Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive re-crosses the bridge at **Grand Narrows** and heads east on Route 223. The road follows the scenic shore of St. Andrew's Channel. The small community of **Christmas Island** is a centre for Gaelic culture, with festivals, classes, milling frolics, and concerts. Continuing along the shore leads to **George's River** and through **Little Bras d'Or** to Highway 105.



At Highway 105 the Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive turns left across a bridge.

**OFF TRAIL** ▶ After crossing the bridge on Highway 105, the Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive continues to the left and circumnavigates **Boularderie Island**, the largest island in Nova Scotia, returning to Highway 105 at the Seal Island Bridge. At the turn a small marina provides a view across the water of the beautiful twin steeples of St. Joseph's Parish Church, built in 1912. From the marina, the road hugs the shoreline, leading to a popular swimming beach at Groves Point Provincial Park. Continuing around the south side of Boularderie, the road passes by farms, woodlots, summer cottages and churches. Near the end of the island the road moves inland, providing views of the Great Bras d'Or Channel, then heads back to Highway 105 near Seal Island Bridge.

Turn left to continue on the Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive.

**OFF TRAIL** ▶ A right turn onto Highway 105 to Exit 14 leads to **Big Bras d'Or**, where boat tours take visitors to the dramatically beautiful Bird Islands. These islands, rising like rocky pillars from the sea, are the nesting grounds of thousands of seabirds, including razorbills, kittiwakes, and over 300 pairs of Atlantic puffins. Boat tours bring visitors up close to the island's craggy seacliffs where hundreds of seabirds nest and soar.

Also in Big Bras d'Or is Dalem Lake Provincial Park (turn right from the church), on the shore of a small, almost perfectly round lake with a hiking trail around it, a picnic area, and a small sandy beach.



Back on Highway 105, the Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive continues, crossing the beautiful Seal Island Bridge. Spanning the chasm of Great Bras d'Or Channel, the bridge is 761 m (2,475 ft.) long with a clearance of 37 m (120 ft.) above sea level.

The road then climbs steeply up the side of Kelly's Mountain, where several lookoffs provide breathtaking views of the Great Bras d'Or Channel, the Seal Island Bridge and St. Ann's Harbour.

**OFF TRAIL** ▶ At the sharp turn at the beginning of the drive up Kelly's Mountain, a broad, well-graded gravel road follows the water's edge to **New Campbellton**. At the end of the road, a popular but challenging hiking trail leads to Cape Dauphin and a sea cave known as the Fairy Hole.



The Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive continues west along Highway 105 toward Baddeck, joining the Cabot Trail at Exit 11. A right turn at this intersection will follow the Cabot Trail north to St. Ann's, Ingonish and the Cape Breton Highlands.

Continuing west on Highway 105, take a left turn at Exit 10 and follow the road into **Baddeck**, a picturesque village at the edge of the Bras d'Or Lakes. Baddeck and its attractions are described in the Cabot Trail section of this guide.

The Bras d'Or Lakes Scenic Drive continues on Highway 105 along the edge of the lake through **Wagmatcook** and **Bucklaw** to the busy full-service community of **Whycocomagh**, which is centrally located with easy access to all of the Cape Breton travelways. The name originates from the Mi'kmaq word for "head of the waters". Nearby Whycocomagh Provincial Park features a picnic area and campground with exceptional views of St. Patrick's Channel.



LENOIR FORGE MUSEUM PHOTO SUPPLIED BY JEFF STANLEY

# Explore Cape Breton's Heritage Coast

**Our heritage has stood the test of time - come discover for yourself our culture and treasures on Cape Breton Island's historic eastern shores.**

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*For more information and your free Visitor's Guide, we invite you to visit the St. Peter's Visitor Information Centre or contact us:*

**www.richmondcounty.ca**  
 tourism@richmondcounty.ca  
 Toll-free: 1-800-567-2600

## ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

- ▶ Birdwatch - catch sight of Bald Eagles nesting on the shores of the Bras d'Or Lakes
- ▶ Kayak, canoe or sail the beautiful Bras d'Or Lakes
- ▶ Camp or picnic in Provincial Parks
- ▶ Enjoy live entertainment - from traditional Cape Breton music to comedy theatre
- ▶ Discover hidden treasures - beachcomb or scuba dive along our splendid inlet shores and coastlines
- ▶ Golf at one of Cape Breton's finest 18-hole golf courses
- ▶ Visit our historic sites, museums and craft shops for a living history lesson
- ▶ Among all this, anything your heart desires...you will be inspired to plan your own itinerary for fun and adventure!

## THINGS TO DO & SEE

- ▶ Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site
- ▶ St. Peter's Canal - linking the Atlantic Ocean with the Bras d'Or Lakes
- ▶ Cape Auguet Eco Trail in Isle Madame
- ▶ Rita's Tea Room in Big Pond
- ▶ Louisbourg Playhouse
- ▶ Nicholas Denys Museum in St. Peter's
- ▶ Dundee Resort & Golf Club
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### Check In Information and Reservation Service

Nova Scotia's official visitor information and reservation service, representing over 700 hotels, motels, inns, bed and breakfasts and campgrounds throughout the province, as well as car rental agencies. 1-800-565-0000 or [www.checkinnovascotia.com](http://www.checkinnovascotia.com)



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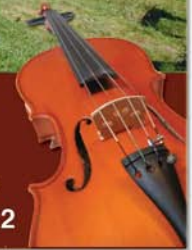
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# Highland Village Museum

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902 725 2272  
<http://highlandvillage.museum.gov.ns.ca>

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