

Park Journal



PARC NATIONAL de Miguasha

2007-2008 Edition



THE GRAND TOUR OF QUÉBEC'S NATIONAL PARKS



Environmental protection is at the heart of the concerns of our society. Not a day goes by without this topic being discussed in the media and public forums. In addition to adhering to the strict conservation mission of national parks, Sépaq has chosen to adopt an ecological approach in the day-to-day management of territories.

Most of the good practices implemented aim to reduce energy consumption, drinking water consumption, and greenhouse gases emissions associated with the improvement of and access to national parks.

Among the many actions taken to improve our management-related environmental scorecard, mention may be made notably of the residual material management program, the use of 100% post-consumption recycled paper, the reduction of our fleet of vehicles, greater reliance on public transit services, the use of solar energy, better

water management by controlling shower utilization times, the use of biodegradable household products, and the reduction of grass-covered surfaces.

We would like to thank all Quebecers and visitors from outside Québec who have chosen to frequent national parks over the last seven years.

Your comments have enabled us to improve our approaches as well as the range of activities and services that we offer. Your many visits, close to 3.6 million visit-days in 2006, have encouraged us to offer you, on a daily basis, a high-quality "Park Experience" tailored to your needs. Continue to inspire us... For our part, we promise to keep up our work: promoting the discovery of and access to Québec's most beautiful protected natural heritage while ensuring an acceptable minimum impact.

National parks are here for you to enjoy!

By way of introduction

The mission of Parcs Québec

With an aim to achieving harmonious development at the cultural, social, economic and regional levels, Parcs Québec is responsible for the conservation and development of territories that are representative of Québec's 43 natural regions or exceptional sites, while ensuring that they are accessible for educational and outdoor use.

All of Québec's national parks were created in accordance with World Conservation Union standards. The criteria are defined as follows:

- A relatively vast area that represents one or more ecosystems that are moderately or not at all transformed by exploitation;
- Where animal and plant species, geomorphological sites and habitats are of particular interest from a scientific, educational or recreational viewpoint, and that offers scenery of great beauty;
- In which the highest competent authority of the country has taken measures to eliminate exploitation and to instil respect for the ecological, geomorphological or aesthetic aspects, on the whole;
- Where a visit is authorized, under certain conditions, for educational, cultural or recreational purposes.

A word from the team

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to Parc national de Miguasha and the fascinating world of palaeontology. We very cordially invite you to share this universe of animal and plant fossils, a world that never fails to fascinate us.

A visit of the natural history museum becomes a true popular science experience as you discover, at your own pace, the wealth of this palaeontological treasure, designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. If you're in the mood, stop by our restaurant and boutique facilities or let yourself be tempted by the *L'évolution de la vie* trail. The entire staff wishes you an excellent visit, one that will become a memorable moment.

This is the fourth edition of our magazine. Take time to read it from cover to cover because it's full of useful information. We wish you pleasant reading, wonderful discoveries and an enriching stay at Parc national de Miguasha.

The park management team

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Discover our regional parks



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Getting to know Parc national de Miguasha better

Making science accessible to visitors of all ages...



A small park, but...!

Parc national de Miguasha is a tiny scientific gem. Located on the estuary of the Ristigouche River, it occupies a mere 0.8 km², making it the smallest park in the Parcs Québec Network. It was created in 1985 to preserve and promote a cliff containing fish and plants 380 million years old. These fossils have gained a reputation beyond our borders because they have helped us understand an important step in evolution, the moment when vertebrates emerged from the water. The natural history museum is central to the park and its activities.

A “national” park

Just like the other parks in the Parcs Québec network, Parc de Miguasha holds *national park* status. World-wide, the status of “national park” has been defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature

(IUCN), which has also set the standards and criteria pertaining to territory protection, zoning etc. that apply to national parks. Because Quebec parks meet their criteria for national parks, we say Parc “national” de Miguasha.

A World Heritage Site...

In December 1999, the addition of the park to the UNESCO World Heritage List confirmed the international calibre of the Miguasha site. This recognition is warranted by the diversity of species, the quality of their conservation, the quantity of specimens and the representativeness of the Devonian Era, a period in Earth’s geological history known as the “age of fish”. Miguasha, in a way, is a snapshot of these ancient times. The park became the second site in the province of Québec, after the historic district of Québec City, and the thirteenth in Canada to be awarded this exceptional recognition.

A leading attraction

With its unique theme focussing on palaeontology, the natural history museum is recognised as a top-notch discovery travel attraction on the Gaspé Peninsula and in Québec. It reaches a clientele that prefers this type of tourism, which allows them to learn about things while on vacation. The travel industry awarded the park the 2004 *Grand Prix régional de l’entreprise touristique* for public sector businesses. Its vocation as a traffic builder was bolstered by a \$5-million investment in 2002-2003, used to renovate the infrastructures and completely revamp the permanent exhibits.

Learning the basics of palaeontology

The museum allows visitors, adults and children alike, to become familiar with palaeontology, the science that studies life forms of a very distant past. Focusing on fossils and evolution, the permanent exhibits are fine examples of a scientific museology that places an emphasis on making science accessible to the general public.

Guided tours, a tradition at the museum since 1978, are offered from June 1 to October 8. They give visitors an opportunity to discover the exhibits, educational laboratory and cliff in the company of a guide-interpreter. Visitors can also tour the exhibits on their own, at their own pace. Information on guided tours and the exhibits is available at the museum reception desk.

Broaden your knowledge

During the heart of summer, the museum offers a series of talks, using non-technical language, at the amphitheatre. Topics, of interest to people of all ages, include dinosaurs, the development of the universe, the evolution of mammals, and human history. The schedule is available at the museum reception desk.

Aquaview: Dive into the origins

This multimedia presentation at the amphitheatre uses the wonders of technology to take visitors of all ages back to the tropical waters of ancient oceans where they will discover fish from another age. The virtual dive is, in fact, a North American first since Parc national de Miguasha is the only place on this side of the ocean where visitors can see this multimedia presentation designed in France in cooperation, notably, with the Musée national d’Histoire naturelle de Paris. The screening schedule is available at the museum reception desk.



PRESERVING THE CLIFF FOR HUMANITY

The fossiliferous cliff represents an exceptional universal heritage that must be preserved for humanity. The *Parks Act* stipulates that it is forbidden to take rock samples within park limits. Moreover, the Escuminac rock formation is protected by a Government of Quebec Order-in-Council which prohibits mining claims inside the park.

This is why it is strictly forbidden to excavate, break open rocks or take stones from the beach or cliff. Visitors who discover fossils on the beach are asked to give them to a park staff member or bring them to the museum reception area.

Dogs, all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles are also prohibited within park limits. Generally speaking, the conservation mission cannot be achieved without the collaboration of the thousands of visitors of all ages who frequent the park every year.



Natural history museum visiting hours

For 2007-2008:

June 1 to August 31:

Daily from 9 am to 6 pm

September 1 to October 9:

Daily from 9 am to 5 pm

The rest of the year:

Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 12 noon and from 1 pm to 4:30 pm

Closed on public holidays and during the year’s end holidays.

Open year round...

The natural history museum has been open year round for several years to meet local demand and needs. School groups, local organisations and a number of visitors have taken advantage of the opportunity to visit in winter. By opening its doors to the visual arts, fine crafts and community events, the museum has also attracted new clienteles.

2007-2008 entrance fees, taxes included

	2007-2008 entrance fees, taxes included			PASS	
	Park + Museum	With pass*	Park only	Park	Network
Adults	\$11.50	\$8.00	\$3.50	\$16.50	\$30.00
Child (aged 6 to 17)	\$5.50	\$4.00	\$1.50	\$7.50	\$15.00
Child (under 5)	Free	n.a.	Free	Free	Free
Families (1 adult + children)	\$16.25	\$11.25	\$5.00	\$25.00	\$45.00
Families (2 adults + children)	\$25.00	\$18.00	\$7.00	\$35.00	\$70.00
Groups (per person)	\$10.00	n.a.	\$3.00	n.a.	n.a.
School groups	Free	n.a.	Free	n.a.	n.a.

*Note: Park and network passes allow access to park territory only. To visit the museum and its permanent and temporary exhibitions, the card holder must pay the difference between the entrance fee to the park and the entrance fee to the museum.



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A world waiting to be discovered...

A rock from a distant land

The Australian rock on display in the great hall is a gift from the “Age of Fishes” museum which promotes Canowindra, a fossil site holding National Heritage status. The “Age of Fishes” museum is considered a sister museum to Miguasha in the southern hemisphere because both sites date from the Upper Devonian Era. Weighing 200 kg, the rock holds several specimens of *Bothriolepis yeungae* and *Remigolepis walkeri* placoderms, species closely related to the *Bothriolepis canadensis* of Miguasha. There are few specimens from Canowindra outside Australia, so this gift to our park salutes the special relationship that exists between the two museums.

Two temporary exhibits to discover

This summer, until October 8, there is a double feature playing in the temporary exhibit space across from the boutique. Both exhibits were produced by the Centre thématique fossilifère du Témiscamingue. The exhibits, “200 millions d’années avant les dinosaures” and “La Terre tremble” take a closer look at life on Earth as it was 450 million years ago and explore the dynamics of earth quakes. They will surely awaken the amateur palaeontologist and geologist in visitors of all ages. Make sure to add these to your “must see” list!

A museum access button is required to visit the temporary exhibits.



OUR GREEN APPROACH TO THE DAILY MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL PARKS

Sépaq thinks and acts green in managing the national parks under its care. It knows how important national parks are to the success of sustainable development and lets this guide every environmental decision it makes. Concrete measures include:

- An ecological integrity program to monitor the state of health of parks
- More and more buildings powered by solar energy
- Public transportation in the Hautes-Gorges-de-la-Rivière-Malbaie, Gaspésie, Jacques-Cartier and Oka national parks
- Electric vehicles in the Oka and Îles-de-Boucherville national parks
- Downsizing and rationalization of the vehicle fleet
- Reduction in drinking water consumption in campgrounds thanks to water meters in showers
- A waste management program
- Progressive discontinuation of the use of plastic bags for consumers
- Promotion tools printed on 100% postconsumer paper
- Biodegradable household products
- Natural or neon lighting

These actions are proof of our commitment to help improve the use of resources and preserve the land for the benefit of current and future generations.

Quality visitor services: Our priority...



Qualité Tourisme Gaspésie certification

Parc national de Miguasha received a *Qualité Tourisme Gaspésie* certification last November. Awarded by the Association touristique régionale de la Gaspésie for quality customer service, this certification is modeled on the *Qualité de Tourisme Québec* program and the standard set by the Bureau de la normalisation du Québec. It attests the efforts made at *Parc national de Miguasha* to develop a culture of quality service that places an emphasis on satisfying our visitors’ needs.

BUY NATURE

Did you know that Parcs Québec “Boutique Nature” stores offer a wide range of souvenirs, clothing, and nature discovery products?

And now, to gradually eliminate the use of plastic bags in its network, Parcs Québec is offering reusable bags – a tangible way of helping preserve our precious environment!

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Visit our virtual boutique at ParcsQuebec.com

ALL PROFITS ARE REINVESTED IN THE PARKS TO ENSURE THEIR PRESERVATION.



OUR VISION OF QUALITY VISITOR SERVICES

At Parc national de Miguasha, offering professional and attentive visitor services is a commitment on the part of both the management and the visitor services team. Visitor services are central to the strategic vision of the park; to this end, we do our utmost to provide quality visitor reception, offer distinctive activities and services, respect our visitors and appeal to their intelligence. The ultimate goal of this vision is to make our visitor services the keystone of the park experience for visitors of all ages and origins.

Please tell us about your experience at Parc national de Miguasha.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Reception				
Guided tour				
Le Dévonien Restaurant				
Boutique L'Échoppe				
Cleanliness				
Contact with our staff				
Road signage				
Overall park experience				

How did you hear about the park?

Please drop in the box at the museum reception desk.

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Research: Central to development



Research: at the heart of development

Palaeontological research is central to the development of the park and its natural history museum because it allows us to build our knowledge about this unique fossil heritage. The research findings done at this site, combined with what is done elsewhere contribute to the advancement of knowledge around the world about how life has evolved. Research findings also serve to keep the educational program current.

Digs

Fossil digs supply the raw material for research, hence the importance of doing the work systematically. In summer, the dig team works on the cliff, carefully baring each layer of rock. The data collected help to improve our understanding of how the landscape in the Chaleur Bay area evolved hundreds of millions of years ago. Over the years, nearly 500 fossils are extracted, on average, every year from the cliff during digs and patrols.

Field expeditions

Scientific research also means field expeditions. During the summer, these expeditions into the Gaspé Peninsula hinterland and other areas, contribute to building up reference collections that document the ancient history of the northeastern portion of North America. These collections also emphasise the high quality of the Gaspé Peninsula's fossil heritage.

Research and its partners

Palaeontology is a universal science and research is done worldwide through partnerships with different institutions. They include the Musée d'Histoire naturelle de Paris, a long-standing special partner, and other institutions such as the Université du Québec à Rimouski. At the present time, research projects are underway with partners in France, Sweden, Australia and Québec. In the last two years, some forty research reports have been published, or are in the works, on the Miguasha fossils or specimens conserved in the museum's collections. A number of these research reports have appeared in prestigious journals, including the magazine, *Nature*.

A close-up look at the laboratory...



The laboratory

Central to research, the lab is a lively place where fish and plants surface to tell us how life was 380 million years ago. Manual, mechanical and chemical techniques are used to extract them from the rock. Preparing fossils calls for unfailing manual dexterity because the tiniest false manoeuvre can forever damage a specimen. The quality of work done in the lab is crucial since fossils are considered a non-renewable resource.

The national collection

Once extracted and identified, the fossils are added to the collection: information about each specimen is entered into the data base, the specimen is numbered and sorted by genus and by species and placed in one of the cabinets holding nearly 10,000 Miguasha specimens.

Begun two years ago and advancing well, computerising the collection is a long and exacting task. This spring, no fewer than 7,300 specimens had already been recorded in the collection data base.

The stratigraphic collection

The stratigraphic collection room holds collections of specimens representing the fossil heritage of the Gaspé Peninsula and Québec collected during field expeditions or acquired through donation or purchase. Last year, this room became even more dynamic when storage cabinets were installed, making it easier to manage the collection. These cabinets were purchased using funding

provided by Parcs Québec and Heritage Canada under the *Museums Assistance Program*.

The type collection

The type collection room, or *typotheque*, holds specimens that have been illustrated or mentioned in official publications. These specimens are of particular significance because they are known throughout the world thanks to the outreach of the publications in which they are mentioned. This room is also furnished with display cabinets purchased with funding from Parcs Québec and Heritage Canada.

The documentation centre

The shelves of the documentation centre contain thousands of specialised reference documents on palaeontology, biology and geology as well as the park's documentary and iconographic archives. There are hundreds of documents on fossils alone, all published since 1879 when the first study on a Miguasha fish was published. It is expected that computerisation of centre documents will be completed in 2007.

A section of the documentation centre is dedicated to the library named in honour of Pierre J. Lespérance, a scientist who greatly contributed to the development of geology and palaeontology on the Gaspé Peninsula and in Quebec. When he retired from the Université de Montréal in 1997, Professor Lespérance donated his library to the park.



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THE GREAT OUTDOORS AND CONSERVATION - THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF *Leave No Trace* Canada

Because its role encompasses more than conservation alone, Parcs Québec wants to use every possible occasion to foster support among visitors to its national parks for the adoption of ecologically responsible practices in outdoor activities. This is the reason Parcs Québec is proud to have chosen to promote the principles of *Sans trace*, the french version of the popular American *Leave No Trace* program. This code of outdoor ethics is based on the following seven principles:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimise Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors



These principles are of course inherent in the regulatory framework that governs our national parks.

At the same time, awareness and application of *Leave No Trace* values in every single one of our outdoor activities, even the most unnoteworthy among them, can help reduce their impact on our natural environment.

To learn how you can best play your part inside Québec's national parks, you can consult www.parksquebec.com, and click on the *Conservation Mission* tab.

To find out more about *Leave No Trace*, go to www.aventure-ecotourisme.qc.ca, choose English, then click on the *Leave No Trace* tab.



Recycle! It's important...



Glass...



Metal...



And plastic...



...are recyclable. Thank you for contributing to the protection of the environment by putting your containers in the tubs provided for this purpose, in all national parks in the Parcs Québec network.



To make your stay even more pleasant...

At the end of the trail, stairs allow you to come back by way of the beach. A different setting, but just as pleasing.

Picnic area

If you like eating outdoors, there are shaded picnic tables located here and there along the top of the cliff, with amazing panoramic views of the Ristigouche Estuary as a bonus. What better way to enjoy a lunch!



Maison de l'Estuaire

Located one km from the museum, the Maison de l'Estuaire is perfect for small groups or families wanting a pied-à-terre to visit the Chaleur Bay area. The house includes five bedrooms for up to ten people, a large living room, a kitchen, dining room and bathroom. It is air-conditioned, furnished and bedding is included. Magnificent view overlooking the Ristigouche River. For information and to book: 418-794-2475 or 1 800 665-6527.



Maison Parent

With its 3 bedrooms Maison Parent can accommodate 6 people. Located inside park limits, 300 meters from the museum of natural history, it features a large living room with patio doors opening onto a terrace, a kitchen and bathroom. The house is furnished and bedding is included. Magnificent view overlooking the Ristigouche River. For information and to book: 418-794-2475 or 1 800 665-6527.

L'évolution de la vie trail

The 1.5-km trail follows the top of the cliff and offers remarkable views of the countryside through the trees. If you like to journey through time, the interpretive panels along the trail tell the tale of the major stages in the evolution of life on Earth. Rest places along the way invite walkers to stop for a while.

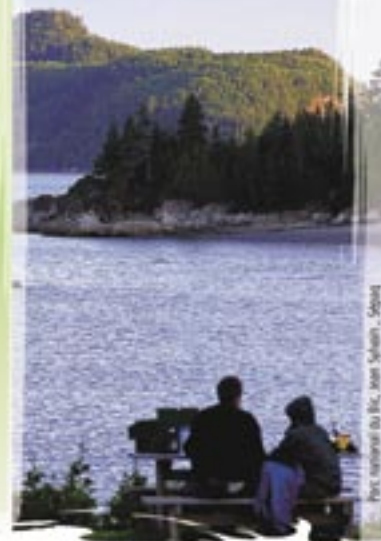
AVENTURE ÉCOTOURISME QUÉBEC

The outfitters, members of Aventure Écotourisme Québec, in collaboration with Sépaq, offer you several stays and guided activities especially conceived for having you discover exceptional natural spaces.

AEQ groups together more than one hundred producers in adventure tourism and in ecotourism that join forces for offering you high-quality products.

Consult the Association's website for planning your guided activities in Sépaq's national parks, wildlife reserves and tourist centres

For more information on the Association and his members: www.aventure-ecotourisme.qc.ca



NATIONAL PARKS STARRING IN *Sea & Mountains* IN EASTERN QUÉBEC

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Parc national de la Gaspésie

Parc national du Canada Forillon

Parc national de l'île-Bonaventure-et-du-Rocher-Percé

Parc national de Migouasha

Lieu historique national du Canada de la Bataille-de-la-Ristigouche

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