

## To Reach the Park

The Islands Provincial Park is located just off Highway 103, 1 kilometre (.62 miles) west of Shelburne, on Nova Scotia's South Shore. While traveling west on Highway 103, take Exit 26 (Shelburne) onto Route 3. While traveling east on Highway 103, take Exit 27 at Birchtown.



## RESERVATIONS

1-888-544-3434

9:00 am to 11:00 pm AT (7 days a week)

[www.novascotiaparks.ca](http://www.novascotiaparks.ca) (24 hours)

## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**Parks and Recreation Division  
Department of Natural Resources**

RR # 1, Belmont,  
Colchester County,  
Nova Scotia, B0M 1C0  
(902) 662-3030  
[www.novascotiaparks.ca](http://www.novascotiaparks.ca)

**Department of  
Natural Resources**

PO Box 369,  
Shelburne, Nova Scotia  
B0T 1W0  
(902) 875-2501

**The Islands Provincial Park**  
(902) 875-4304  
(May – September)



Photos courtesy Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage.

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# The Islands Provincial Park

*The Islands Provincial Park, lies intertwined with nature on land jutting into Shelburne Harbour on the scenic Lighthouse Route. Its position, directly across from Shelburne, gives visitors an unmatched view of the town's marina and historic waterfront. The Islands was the first camping park opened by the province, some 50 years ago. This is evident in the grace and maturity of the natural surroundings. Above your head, century-old pines reach skyward. Underfoot, the 350 million-year-old granite is so close in spots you can touch it. Granite boulders pepper the land, and outcroppings can rise three-stories out of the ground. For campers, picnickers, photographers, and history and geology buffs, The Islands is a coastal treasure just waiting to be discovered.*

## Natural History

**Set in stone** The movement of massive glaciers uncovered this land 10,000 years ago, exposing much of its granite bedrock to the elements. After the ice melted, rising sea levels formed the long narrow harbour and its islands.

With granite so accessible and a water transportation route at hand, it's not surprising this area was of interest to mining companies. Beginning in 1890—some say even earlier—a high-quality granite called “Scotia Grey” was quarried right here in what is now The Islands park. Remains of a quarry site can be seen behind the park office building, where the face of a rock ledge still towers an impressive 30 feet above ground.

Quarrying continued on and off until the 1960s. Its stones were used in architecture, for monuments, and for cobblestones in Nova Scotia and in Europe. Look for the local grey granite in the Shelburne Post Office (built 1908), the Halifax Herald Building (1895) and the immense St. Bernard Church (1942) on the Acadian French shore.

**First impressions** Driving into the park, you are greeted by a unique administration building—a log cabin of red spruce, built by hand in the 1960s. Stop in to register, to meet the friendly park staff, or to plan your stay in the area. The rustic interior immediately warms you—amber-coloured log walls, an open-trussed ceiling, a commanding stone fireplace.

Outside, you see the work of glaciers once again. Forested campsites are nestled among curiously-placed granite boulders; roads curve in and around them. These rocks—called “glacial erratics”—were mere pebbles to the glaciers that plucked them from South Mountain nearly 100 km away. When the ice melted, here they stayed.

**Get ready to explore** Walking and biking are popular with park visitors. The paved lane that loops through the park is a hit with smart young campers who thought to bring their bicycles along. For visitors wanting a longer stroll, the old railway bed runs past the park. Head east 2 km to the town of Shelburne, or west 3-4 km to the Black Loyalist Heritage Site in Birchtown. To explore the local harbour, bays and inlets, the boat launch provides easy access for kayaks, canoes and other watercraft.

A causeway connects the camping area to a second island—the picnic park. Most of the coastal granite here has been placed by nature, but look on the east side for foundations of two wharves used during the quarry days. Stroll along the shoreline path, smell the wild roses in summer and enjoy the sound of water gently lapping at the shore.







Our Administration building was the hand built of red spruce in the 1960s.

### Cultural History

**Shelburne** The Islands park lies less than a kilometer over the water from the history-rich town of Shelburne. Settled in 1783 by Loyalists to the British Crown after the American Revolution, the town instantly became a bustling sea-port. Its peak population of nearly 16,000 people in the late 1780s made it the third largest settlement in North America. Thousands of Black Loyalists who escaped from slavery also arrived here between 1783 and 1785. Their community of 1,500 people in nearby Birchtown was the largest settlement of free Black outside Africa at the time.

You can still experience the history of centuries past as you stroll through Dock Street waterfront. The town boasts more than 30 original homes from the 1700s, plus restored buildings from later periods and a fascinating museum complex.



The inviting white beach at Sand Hills Provincial Park is an easy day trip from The Islands.

### Area Attractions

- In Shelburne, the Ross-Thompson House and Store Museum (built in 1784) is Nova Scotia's only remaining 18th century store. Across the street, visitors can watch a dory being built at the Dory Shop Museum. The shop produced thousands of these famous small work boats for Canadian and American schooners, from 1880-1970. The Shelburne County Museum showcases the area's rich Loyalist heritage and shipbuilding industry.
- On Cape Sable Island, the Archelaus Smith Museum portrays the island's history, including fishing techniques and gear, the area's many shipwrecks, Cape Island boats, and the lives of prominent sea captains.
- The Old Meeting House Museum in Barrington, built in 1765, is the oldest non-conformist place of worship in Canada. The Woolen Mill Museum contains machinery and exhibits on South Shore sheep raising and wool processing.
- Sand Hills Provincial Park, near Barrington, features an attractive 2.4 kilometre (1.5 mile) white sand beach and picnic facilities.
- Thomas Raddall Provincial Park, Port Joli Harbour, offers camping, hiking, beach access, and a variety of shorelines to explore. Across the harbour, Kejimikujik National Park Seaside Adjunct features trails and coastal views.
- A National Migratory Bird Sanctuary is located at the head of Port Joli Harbour. The Port Joli Basin Conservation Society maintains an observation site on the St. Catherines River Road overlooking the sanctuary.
- For more information on these and other attractions please consult the Nova Scotia Doers and Dreamers Guide, visit a Visitor Information Centre or the website at [www.novascotia.com](http://www.novascotia.com)

Visit nearby Birchtown

**Shelburne Granite Barrens** A 20-minute drive north of the park along the Roseway River, leads you through impressive stands of white pine, then maple and birch, to the low hills of the "Shelburne Granite Barrens." This area is a mosaic of textures—low shrubs like huckleberry and Labrador tea on the exposed flats; pockets of pine and birch where the soil is deeper; red oaks on the ridges. Streams meander between the hills, resting in hollows and bogs, unable to penetrate the foundation beneath.

The future for this land was shaped when passing glaciers scoured the soil down to its granite foundation. Forest fires further depleted its resources to sustain large trees. Boulders, as if sprinkled by giants, dot the land. But these too are the work of glaciers. Granite rocks, trapped in massive ice sheets 10,000 years ago, were simply dropped as the glaciers melted.

The barrens and bogs of southwest Nova Scotia have a beauty of their own. They provide necessary food sources for animals like black bear and moose, and support some rare plants. A feast for the eyes in the fall, the hills glow red with the changing foliage.

### The Islands Provincial Park

- Parking
- Park Office
- Washrooms and Showers
- Vault Toilets
- Picnic Area
- Walking Trail
- Boat Launch
- Campground (62 sites)
- Water
- Firewood
- Dumping Station
- Park Boundary



### A Special Message to Park Visitors

#### PARK SAFETY

- Help preserve and protect this beautiful park for the enjoyment of future generations. Plants, animals and rocks are an important part of its natural heritage. Please do not damage or remove them.
- Bring boats ashore only at designated locations.
- Please keep pets on a leash at all times.
- Firearms are prohibited in the park.

#### PERSONAL SAFETY

- In unsupervised swimming areas children should be watched closely in or near the water. Inflatable swimming aids should not be used.
- Contact park staff for further information about the park. They want to make your visit as enjoyable as possible.

Exit 26  
To: Shelburne  
Shelburne 5km

To: Black Loyalist Heritage Site (Birchtown) 7.9 kms