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ISLAND LIFE

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND OFFERS ALL THE BEAUTY OF AN ATLANTIC SEACOAST SUMMER DESTINATION WITHOUT THE CROWDS.

BY CARLEY D. THORNELL



Left, The island's coastline is breathtaking.

Top right, Thunder Cove Beach is a hidden gem on the island.

Right, The boardwalk floats about the dunes at Prince Edward Island National Park.

Bottom right, The Inn at Bay Fortune serves farm-to-table meals as it has its own culinary farm.

IT'S NOT EVERY DAY YOU GET TO WEAR A

ballcap in a church, but then again, this is no ordinary church.

It's a cooking school in a former parish building—and for those who worship at the altar of the oyster, an afternoon at The Table Culinary Studio is the pinnacle of foodie experiences. You've just returned from an afternoon with George Dowdle of Green Gables Oysters, whose various mignonette riffs dance on the taste buds like a symphony from "Fantasia." His bivalves (and others from Prince Edward Island) are among the most sought-after across the globe, and Dowdle's palate is as refined as a trained toque. But he'll trade a chef's hat any day for overalls and his signature mesh cap that reads "Shuck Me" in order to wade into his aquifer with anyone game enough to sample his briny prizes.

You'll learn that this is way beyond a simple rod dipped in water to fish, and there's an art



to being an aquaculturalist that involves years of training, passion, and some pluck with the shuck. That's met back in the kitchen, where you get to savor your catch with a master chef who's tailored a menu for each group of guests.

This is by no means the last of extraordinary culinary experiences on a long-weekend getaway to the island, where there are innumerable farm-to-table and fish-to-dish memories to be made. Most people fly in and rent a car at the airport for a quick drive to Charlottetown. Arriving at night, it seems impossibly sleepy for a capital. But then again, that's kind of the point behind a journey here; it's easy to loosely plan one activity a day and fill the rest of the time unencumbered, admiring bucolic landscapes and a slower pace of life that has enraptured a new generation thanks to Netflix's *Anne with an E* series. You'll rest easy at the Great George boutique hotel, an eclectic mix of luxury condos, suites and townhouses smack-dab in the middle



Charlottetown is the capital of Prince Edward Island.

of the historic district with a complimentary breakfast smorgasbord. Locals in turn-of-the-century costume wander near here and a few blocks away toward Peake's Wharf along the Atlantic or downtown, beckoning visitors back to a time for which PEI is known best: that of rowdy redheaded schoolgirl Anne Shirley. Even today there's not much urban sprawl, and active walkers can cover the harbor, downtown, and historic Port-la-Joye in an afternoon.

The evening is best saved for ocean kayaking and ravenous appetites. After paddling the Northumberland Strait as the sun begins to set, By-the-Sea Kayaking guides offer up wine, cheese, and stories about what it's like to live on an island. But be sure to save room for some of the best food and hospitality on the island at nearby Landmark Oyster House. Here, mouthwatering crudite and charcuterie boards are made from the best of what's

EXTEND YOUR TRIP WITH A GLAMPING GETAWAY



Geodesic domes on the coast offer away-from-it-all accommodations.

As there's no direct air routing from Greater Boston to PEI, the scenic drive here (about nine hours direct) is an alternative worth considering. Even better, the typical route goes through New Brunswick, another charming maritime gem in its own right with a thriving seafood scene.

The sleepy and secluded northern part of the province offers up an outside-the-box adventure: Cielo Glamping Maritime. Summer is the perfect time to escape to admire views of both the

stars and the sea from one of five deluxe geodesic domes, constructed in part with reclaimed wood from a local farm. This is way beyond camping—each "pearl" has plumbing, a pellet stove, private hot tub and cooktop.

But you likely won't make too many meals if you opt for a weekend stay, as feasts including local oysters, clams, ice creams, and craft coffees (among other epicurean delights) are served. There's even an oyster tasting at check-in. New this year is a paddleboarding and

clam digging adventure, which will also feature foraging for herbs and berries, which will be cooked and served with local craft beers.

Life and business partners Pat Gauvin and Émilie LeBlanc launched Cielo last year in order to "showcase and inspire the development of local products and develop the community," said Gauvin. But it's also been incredibly satisfying to offer visitors "an opportunity to relax and recharge, with great food and the chance to admire nature."



SEASIDE ESCAPES AND LANDSCAPES

Canada is famed for its pristine wintery landscapes, but it's worth trading the snowflakes for powdery sand—summer here is an ideal time to visit for seafood, beaches, and lighthouses aplenty.

Shutterbugs will love **Cape Tryon Lighthouse**, accessible via a bumpy, narrow road that leads to a stunning red sandstone cliff. The working lighthouse was built in 1905 and its vibrant red lantern contrasts nicely with the white building.

Covehead Harbour Lighthouse is one of the most-photographed on PEI and is in the Brackley Beach region. The smaller stretches of sand here don't get as much traffic as the larger ones for those who prefer quieter beach days.

Also part of Prince Edward Island National Park is the new **Robinsons Island Trail System**, three miles of multi-use trails for hikers and bikers of all levels. The stacked loop means adventurers can opt for a shorter or longer route.

Clockwise from top left, Covehead Harbour Lighthouse; George Dowdle of The Table Culinary Studio; and Anne of Green Gables Museum is a popular family tourist attraction.

Needless to say with any summer travel plans, check COVID-19 restrictions.

Please check updates on summer travel to Canada by visiting travel.gc.ca.

available at local farms, in addition to tortiere (French-Canadian meat pie), Atlantic salmon, lobster—and, of course, bivalves.

Epic epicurean experiences continue at the Inn at Bay Fortune, where sparks fly in more ways than one. The prelude to a daily family-style FireWorks Feast with Canadian celebrity chef Michael Smith helming the hearth features a sustainable farm tour with outdoor hors d'oeuvre and cocktail stations. It's all topped off with either a nightcap or marshmallows toasted just so over a blaze as smoke drifts off toward the bay.

There are also feasts for the eyes here, and PEI's landscapes are truly breathtaking. One of Canada's most beautiful is Greenwich PEI National Park, where the dunes trail includes a walk over a pond with an extensive floating boardwalk. This meandering path leads to one of the island's most beautiful white-sand beaches and views of the parabolic dune system that has most folks fervently using the panoramic setting on their camera phones.

The park is a can't-miss on the way to Dalvay by the Sea, the grande dame resort that's Canada's answers to Newport's "cottages."

Built by a railroad tycoon as a summer getaway, the myriad bedrooms here have been converted into stunning guestrooms (though there are also family-friendly cottages on site). It's easy to see why Prince William and Kate Middleton chose to stay at this Queen Anne Revival style National Historic Site nestled between a lake, pond, and the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

It would be easy to spend the rest of a getaway here alternating between lazing on the wraparound porch with a good book, canoeing, kayaking, or swimming—but surely, no trip to Prince Edward Island is complete without a trip to visit the farm that inspired the creation of Anne Shirley. Green Gables Heritage Place blends the experiences of this redheaded heroine and local author Lucy Maud Montgomery, who grew up admiring this idyllic countryside. What's old is new again, where an afternoon exploring Victorian island life kicks off at a pristine new visitors center. Children are enraptured with interpreters costumed as Anne herself, who stroll the farmyard, 19th-century gardens, the Haunted Wood and Lovers Lane. Grab a snack at the brand-new cafe here to fuel up for the journey home, but leave room for dessert— island bovines produce all of the dairy for the tasty ice creams and cheeses at nearby COWS. It's the cherry on top of a sweet Sunday sundae, as a long weekend here draws to a close. ♦