

From April 1, 1977 to March 31, 1978, there were 18.4 million visits to the national parks. Visitors to the parks can participate in activities ranging from guided walks and canoeing in summer to cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in winter.

National historic parks and sites. National historic parks and sites commemorate persons, places and events of major significance in Canada's historical development.

The National Parks Act of 1930 provided that the Governor-in-Council may set apart any land as a national historic park to commemorate a historic event, or preserve any historic landmark or any object of historic, prehistoric or scientific interest of national importance. The Historic Sites and Monuments Act of 1953 and its amendments in 1955 and 1959 provided the statutory base and defined the role of the historic sites and monuments board. The national historic parks and sites branch develops, interprets, operates and maintains historic parks and sites and acts as secretariat for the board.

Parks Canada specifies that for commemoration, a site or structure must be closely associated with a person, place or event of national historical importance, or must illustrate the cultural, social, political, economic or military patterns of history or of a prehistoric people or archeological discovery, or be valuable as an example of architecture. The policy includes guidelines for providing visitor services, interpretive programs and information. Standards are established for preserving, restoring and reconstructing structures which stress authenticity in materials used and in furnishings and artifacts. The policy recognizes the need for a comprehensive program to give thematic and geographical representation and to establish long-range planning.

The historic sites and monuments board may recommend that sites, buildings and other structures of national importance be developed as national historic parks or historic sites or commemorated by the erection of plaques or distinctive monuments. Suggestions for historic sites and parks come from many sources — the general public, members of Parliament, historical societies and other groups, department staff and board members. Before a suggestion is considered, a background paper is prepared by the national historic parks and sites branch research staff. The board determines the significance of the site and makes its recommendation to the minister. If approved, a development plan is prepared.

The national historic parks and sites branch has been instrumental in creating 80 national historic parks and major sites, over 53 operational, and in commemorating with plaques more than 700 persons and events of national (as opposed to local or regional) significance. Negotiations are conducted with provinces for acquiring other sites. The department has entered into 40 cost-sharing agreements with provincial and municipal governments and with incorporated non-profit societies for acquiring and restoring architecturally or historically significant buildings and structures on the understanding that the other party will pay the balance of acquisition and restoration costs and will maintain the buildings in perpetuity. A number of monuments are maintained by the national historic parks and sites branch.

From April 1, 1977 to March 31, 1978 there were 4.3 million visits to Canada's national historic parks and sites. Details on location and characteristics of national historic parks and sites may be obtained from Parks Canada.

The Canadian inventory of historic building begun in 1970 is a computerized program to survey, analyze and categorize old buildings. Exteriors of about 200,000 buildings have been surveyed and almost all have been indexed; interiors of approximately 1,800 of these structures have been surveyed.

Heritage Canada is an independent corporation concerned with conserving buildings, sites and natural and scenic areas. It received an initial federal capital endowment of \$12 million in 1972; interest on this fund is used to further its work. Heritage Canada enlists the support of the general public, foundations and corporations.

National marine parks. Canada is bounded by three oceans and has the largest volume of fresh water in the world. Extension of the national parks system to represent the Pacific, Arctic and Atlantic coasts and inland waters, with identification of the marine natural regions and marine natural history themes is an objective.