

Each park is developed to yield the recreational/conservational potential for which it is suited. Sightseeing, camping, fishing, hiking, photography and nature study are the most popular forms of recreation common to the parks. A program was initiated in 1970 to encourage national, provincial and local associations and private citizens to express their views at special public hearings on development plans for specific parks.

In 88 years, through co-operation between provincial and territorial governments, Canada's national park system has grown to become the world's largest. In 1973, over 16 million persons visited the parks.

Canal systems. Eight historic canals and waterways in Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia are being developed for natural and historic significance. These canals not only provide a broad spectrum of water recreation activities, but give interesting insights into Canada's early years when they were important transportation links.

In Ontario, the 240-mile Trent-Severn Canal links Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay with 43 locks, one marine railway, 33 miles of artificial canal channels and 207 scenic miles of lake and river channels. Navigation time through each lock is 15 to 20 minutes. The 125-mile Rideau Canal connecting Kingston to Ottawa winds through a section of the beautiful Rideau Lakes region. There are 47 locks. Passage time through each is 10 to 15 minutes. Twelve miles of the waterway is artificial canal, while the remainder of the route uses lake and river channels.

In the Quebec system are the 45-mile Richelieu River route connecting the St. Lawrence River with Lake Champlain, which includes nine locks in the 12-mile Chambly Canal and the St. Ours Lock, and the Ottawa River route which includes the Carillon and Ste. Anne locks. On Cape Breton Island, the half-mile St. Peters Canal runs from Bras d'Or Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.

National marine parks. Canada is bounded by three oceans and has the largest volume of fresh water in the world. The national parks system will be extended to include representations of the Pacific, Arctic and Atlantic coasts and inland waters, with identification of Marine Natural Regions and Marine Natural History Themes.

National landmarks. Preservation of specific natural wonders, such as the Chub crater in northern Quebec, the frozen pingoes of the Arctic, semi-desert and eroded hills of the Prairies and mountain caves and sea-scapes, would allow on-site interpretation of Canada's natural evolution.

Wild rivers. Many undeveloped Canadian rivers — some with historic appeal — are being surveyed as potential wilderness routes.

Historic waterways, land trails and scenic parkways. Historic water routes, which will include the historic canals, will be developed in co-operation with provincial governments, opening systems of historic waterways across the nation. Historic land trails will be developed for the hiker, horse rider, cyclist, and cross-country skier in co-operation with the provinces and municipalities. Both of these developments will link history with leisure, providing further access to our human heritage. Scenic parkways will lure motorists from super highways to leisurely drives throughout the countryside and provide access to nature trails, picnic sites, campgrounds, historic sites and, where possible, national and provincial parks.

Gatineau Park. In addition to the national parks described above, there is a 138-sq-mile recreation area known as Gatineau Park north of the cities of Ottawa and Hull. Although not designated as a national park, this area is being developed by the federal government as part of the National Capital Region and is under the care of the National Capital Commission. It is a wilderness area of great potential, extending northward from Hull for 35 miles. It now has 25 miles of parkway, magnificent lookouts, lakes, fishing streams, beaches, picnic areas, camping sites, skiing and walking trails and is already one of the finest recreation areas in Canada, enjoyed by nearly 1.8 million visitors each year. A master plan for its further development is under way.

1.4.2 Provincial parks

All provincial governments have established parks within their boundaries. Some parks are wilderness areas set aside in order that some portions of the country might be retained in their natural state. Most of them, however, are smaller areas of exceptional scenic interest which are easily accessible and are equipped or slated for future development as recreational parks with camping and picnic facilities.