



Twilight, Kejimkujik seaside

KEJIMKUJIK

NOVA SCOTIA
ESTABLISHED 1974
403 sq km/100,000 acres

Referred to by staff and locals as “Keji,” Kejimkujik National Park and National Historic Site (see p. 47) teems with wildlife and boasts the greatest diversity of reptiles and amphibians in Atlantic Canada. The park is also home to ancient petroglyphs. Here, the Mi’kmaq cultural landscape dates back centuries. Spanning waterways and forests, the park includes Kejimkujik Seaside, a 22-sq-km (8 sq mi) coastal area replete with a lagoon system and an abundance of beaches, bogs, wildflowers, and coastal wildlife.

In 1995, the inland portion of Kejimkujik was designated a national historic site because of its significant Mi’kmaq heritage. It is the only national park in Canada that has this dual designation. In 2001, UNESCO designated the five counties of southwest Nova Scotia as a biosphere reserve. Kejimkujik inland—which is situated next to

the Tobeatic Reserve and the historic Shelburne River, a Canadian Heritage River—is part of this important biosphere.

The park has numerous lakes, many of them dotted with islands, and several still waters. Features also include fascinating barrens, old-growth forests, and elongated hills known as drumlins. Many of

the physical features of the park were sculpted in the last ice age.

Keji also has a large concentration of rare plant, insect, and animal species, many of them at risk of extinction. Great care and attention is paid to the preservation and propagation of these species, and the park has a number of educational programs in which visitors can take part.

How to Get There

Kejimkujik inland is accessible from both major highways on either side of the province. From Hwy. 101 take exit 22 close to Annapolis Royal and head inland on Hwy. 8. Allow approximately 30 minutes from the exit. From Hwy. 103, take exit 13 at Bridgewater and follow the signs to Kejimkujik. Allow approximately 50 minutes from the exit.

To visit Kejimkujik Seaside, drive toward Liverpool. Continue west on Hwy. 103. Approximately 7 km (4 mi) past exit 21, turn left onto St. Catherine River Road; it’s 6 km (3.5 mi) to the park entrance.

When to Go

Keji is open year-round. Although spring, summer, and fall are the most popular times to visit, many people visit the park during the winter to hike, snowshoe, ski, or experience winter camping. Spring and fall temperatures range from 10° to 15°C (50°–59°F); summer temperatures reach upwards of 24°C (75°F) and in winter they drop between minus 2° and minus 10°C (14°–28°F).

How to Visit

With more than 80 percent of the park accessible only by foot or canoe, Kejimkujik National Park offers backcountry experiences to suit every taste, from relaxing on a secluded island to traversing the park’s ancient canoe routes. In fact, one of the best

ways to experience the park is by canoe—the vehicle of choice here for thousands of years.

It’s easy to see why Albert Bigelow Payne was so eager to recount his journey here by penning *The Tent Dwellers* more than a hundred years ago. The famous author took a historic fishing trip with his friend Eddie Breck and two guides, Charles “the strong” Charleston and Del “the stout” Thomas. The book is hilarious, poignant, insightful—and for sale in the visitor centre.

Boats and bikes can be rented hourly or for up to a week; fishing permits can also be purchased. Consider renting a canoe or kayak at Jake’s Landing and paddling around Lake Kejimkujik, or drive to Merry-makedge for a picnic and swim.

Camping is hugely popular in Kejimkujik, which includes full-service sites along with places for group tenting and backcountry wilderness camping. With 46 backcountry campsites scattered along hiking trails and canoe routes and plenty of space between each site, you’ll feel as if you are the only person in the park. Each site is equipped with two tent pads, a fire box, a picnic table, a privy, firewood, and a pulley device to hoist and safely store your food supply.

PETROGLYPH TOUR

a full day

For a one-day visit, sign up at the Visitor Centre for the **Petroglyph Tour** with a Mi’kmaq interpreter. There are more than 500 petroglyphs in the park—the largest collection in North America. These images give a glimpse into the lives of the Mi’kmaq and how they changed when the Europeans arrived. You’ll hear stories of how

these images came to be and why they are protected.

HIKES

A hiker's haven, Keji features 17 trails ranging from the 0.2-km (0.1 mi) **Mersey Meadow** boardwalk loop to the challenging 19.5-km (12 mi) **Fire Tower Road hike**. **Mill Falls** (2 km/1 mi return) is an easy hike with a surprise ending, while the **Hemlocks and Hardwoods** 5-km (3 mi) loop will take your breath away when you see 400-year-old hemlocks. Six trails are also suitable for biking.

BIRD-WATCHING

Bird-watchers will have plenty to do at both the inland and seaside locations of the park. You can take part in a variety of monitoring programs like the Piping Plover Guardian Program or become a LoonWatcher, tracking pairs of loons in June or their chicks in August on one of 16 lakes in the park.

Keji lies within the Acadian forest zone, a transition between southern deciduous trees (hardwoods) and northern evergreen trees (softwoods). Pockets of original, ancient forests still stand tall in the park. Most impressive are the towering groves of old-growth eastern hemlocks: nature's cathedrals. If you look up, you may see the northern goshawk, a swift and powerful hunting hawk that likes to nest in the hemlock stands.

KEJI AT NIGHT

Kejimikujik has been designated a Dark Sky Preserve by the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (see pp. 58–59). This means that Keji

is an area in which active measures are taken to educate and promote the reduction of light pollution.

Join park staff for an evening astronomy program. Bring a blanket and get ready to experience something special as Keji is one of the best places for night sky observation on the eastern seaboard. Kejimikujik dark sky programming is unique as staff combine scientific data with Mi'kmaq legends in a spell-binding presentation.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

When visiting the park with children, consider enrolling them in the Kejimikujik Explorers Club. Sponsored and promoted by a group of volunteers called The Friends of Keji, the Explorers Club is a series of indoor and outdoor educational activities that score high on the fun scale. Each child receives an Explorers Club Passport (available at the outdoor theatre or visitor cen-

tre), and every evening the explorers are recognized at a special ceremony.

The park also offers plenty of volunteer opportunities. You can join a core of scientists and trained volunteers and take part in a variety of projects ranging from searching for eastern ribbon snakes and examining their movement patterns to working on loon surveys or protecting Blanding's turtle eggs and tracking their hatchlings.



KEJIMKUJIK NATIONAL PARK

(Parc national Kejimkujik)

INFORMATION & ACTIVITIES

VISITOR CENTRE

Kejimkujik and National Historic Site

Visitor Centre 3005 Main Parkway, Rte. 8, Maitland Bridge, NS B0T 1B0. Phone (902) 682-2772. Open mid-June to early September (limited hrs. late Sept.–early June).

SEASONS & ACCESSIBILITY

Park open year-round.

HEADQUARTERS

Kejimkujik and National Historic Site Visitor Centre. Phone (902) 682-2772. www.parkscanada.gc.ca/kejimkujik.

FRIENDS OF KEJIMKUJIK

Friends of Keji Cooperating Association

50 Pinetree Crescent, Hammonds Plains, NS B3Z 1K4. info@friendsofkeji.ns.ca; www.friendsofkeji.ns.ca.

ENTRANCE FEES

\$6 per person, \$15 per group per day; \$30 per person, \$75 per group per season.

PETS

Owners must leash pets, pick up waste.

ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

The following are wheelchair accessible: visitor centre; boardwalk and viewing platform at **Mersey Meadow Trail**; picnic shelter, deck, and washrooms on **Mill Falls Trail**; six sites and one washroom at **Jeremy's Bay Campground**; washrooms and picnic sites at **Jake's Landing**; playground and picnic area at **Merrymakedge Beach**.

THINGS TO DO

Guided canoe outings, hiking, cycling, swimming, fishing (April–Aug.; permit \$10 per day, \$34 per year), skiing, and snowshoeing. Rent canoes and bicycles at Jake's Landing.

SPECIAL ADVISORIES

- Bring portable camp stoves for backcountry camping. Open fires may be banned in dry conditions.
- Do not leave food unattended. Pack coolers in vehicles.

- Check with staff before going into backcountry to learn about avoiding wildlife.

OVERNIGHT BACKPACKING

Backcountry camping registration mandatory. 46 backcountry campsites, each with two tent pads, a firebox, a picnic table, a pit privy, and firewood. Backcountry guide and map available for purchase at the visitor centre. For reservations, call (902) 682-2772 or stop by visitor centre.

CAMPGROUNDS

Campgrounds open mid-May to mid-October; 60 sites open for winter camping. **Jeremy's Bay**, 358 sites (91 with electricity), near Kejimkujik Lake. Hot showers, washrooms, outdoor sinks, playgrounds, picnic tables, fireplaces, tent pads, dumping station, and outdoor theatre. For reservations call (877) 737-3783 or visit www.pccamping.ca. Serviced sites with electricity \$29 per night; unserviced sites with washroom building (toilets and showers) \$26 per night. Primitive sites \$26. Group camping at **Jim Charles Point** for up to 80 people, \$5 per person.

HOTELS, MOTELS, & INNS

(unless otherwise noted, rates are for a 2-person double, high season, in Canadian dollars)

Outside the park:

Milford House Rte. 8, South Milford, RR#4 Annapolis Royal, NS B0S 1A0. (877) 532-5751. www.milfordhouse.ca. \$155–\$265.

White Point Beach Resort Queens County, NS B0T 1G0. (902) 354-2711. www.whitepoint.com. \$145. Packages \$178–\$198.

The Whitman Inn 12389 Hwy. 8, Kempt, NS B0T 1B0. (902) 682-2226. www.whitmaninn.com. \$69–\$125.

Caledonia Country Hostel Caledonia, NS. (902) 682-3266. \$60. www.caledoniacountryhostel.com.

EXCURSIONS

FORT ANNE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

ANNAPOLIS ROYAL, NS



Canada's oldest national historic site and most attacked fort is full of wonder and intrigue. Its story reaches back more than 3,000 years to the Mi'kmaq. In the 1600s and 1700s, the French and the British set up forts and vied for supremacy. Fort Anne houses an impressive 2.4-by-5.5-m (8 by 18 ft) heritage tapestry, crafted by more than a hundred volunteers using some three million stitches. (902) 532-2397 or (902) 532-2321. 50 km (30 mi) north of park via Hwy. 8.

KEJIMKUJIK NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

MAITLAND BRIDGE, NS



The entire landscape of Kejimkujik is designated as a national historic site and commemorates Mi'kmaq culture dating back thousands of years. Visitors can join a tour led by a Mi'kmaq interpreter and visit ancient rock carvings known as petroglyphs. The park has a rich history of aboriginal campgrounds and traditional canoe routes. Discover more in the park's visitor centre. (902) 682-2772.

MELANSON SETTLEMENT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

ANNAPOLIS ROYAL, NS



Starting in the 1660s and for almost a century, the Melanson Settlement was home to Charles Melanson, Marie Dugas, and their descendants. This site was discovered during a survey for Acadian sites in 1984. Archaeologists eventually located the ruins of several cellars, and the site is now well documented. A short interpretive trail tells the story of this historic Acadian homestead. (902) 532-2321. 75 km (47.5 mi) north of park via Hwy. 8.