



Potatoes are one of Prince Edward Island's most significant claim to fame. | ROBIN AND ARLENE KARPAN PHOTOS

Trip to Prince Edward Island melds rural and seaside life

TALES FROM THE ROAD



ARLENE & ROBIN KARPAN

Prince Edward Island has several claims to fame: long sandy beaches, blazing red cliffs, picture-perfect fishing villages, fresh-off-the-boat seafood, *Anne of Green Gables*, and rich history. And of course, it also has potatoes, lots of potatoes.

What struck us most about traveling around P.E.I. was the melding of rural and seaside life. While other parts of the country may rely on farming and fishing, here they seem part of the same landscape. It's not unusual for a fishing village in a deep protected inlet to be almost surrounded by farmland. Potato crops or grazing land often have beaches or the island's iconic sculpted sandstone shoreline as a backdrop.

The north coast is dominated by Prince Edward Island National Park, with long stretches of rugged red cliffs, coastal sand dunes, and pristine beaches. The park is also home to Green Gables Heritage Place, among the island's top attractions.

When author Lucy Maud Montgomery penned her famous *Anne of Green Gables* book, she based the fictional story on a real place — a farmhouse owned by her cousins. The original house, complete with green gables, along with the surrounding property,



The West Point Lighthouse is the island's tallest at about 21 metres.

has been preserved as an historic site.

Several scenic small fishing villages are nearby, such as North Rustico, just outside the park and known for its seafood restaurants. The tiny but wildly colourful community of French River is one of the most photographed spots, owing partly to the convenient hilltop viewpoint right beside the highway. Along the south coast lies the quintessential fishing village of Victoria-by-the-Sea where we enjoyed the view while lunching on P.E.I.'s famous mussels at bargain prices at an outdoor take-out restaurant.

Our most memorable stay was at a lighthouse. The West Point Lighthouse is the island's tallest at about 21 metres. Built in 1875, its unusual design is a square-tapered tower with black and white stripes. The beacon still operates and visitors are welcome to wander through to

see the workings and museum exhibits.

The attached small inn gives guests a chance to experience life at a lighthouse, though unlike early lighthouse keepers, we don't have to watch for ships in distress. That doesn't mean that there will be no surprises, however. Part of the local folklore is that many people have witnessed the Phantom Ship, a fully rigged sailing ship that appears to be burning, though the phantom usually vanishes as suddenly as it shows up.

A short drive from West Point, the Canadian Potato Museum celebrates the island's top crop, accounting for a quarter of the country's spuds. It has everything you ever wanted to know about potatoes, from their origins in the South American Andes to the history of production in Canada, why

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The province's north shore is known for its pristine beaches, such as Cavendish Beach.



Victoria-by-the-Sea is a quintessential fishing village on the province's south coast.



Prince Edward Island National Park boasts stunning scenery.



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it's a near-perfect food, and the world's largest exhibit of potato-related farm machinery. If you work up an appetite, the attached restaurant serves potatoes any way you like, plus several ways you never imagined. Potato fudge, anyone?

While the countryside and coastlines are P.E.I.'s main attractions, the capital of Charlottetown shouldn't be overlooked. With slightly more than 41,000 people, it's Canada's most easy-going provincial capital. The waterfront next to downtown is the hub of activity with its picturesque setting, cruise ship port, and eateries galore. History looms large everywhere, with the city celebrated as the Birthplace of Confederation. The Charlottetown Conference in 1864 was considered pivotal to Canada becoming a nation.

Though this is Canada's smallest province, only 280 kilometres long, its size can be misleading. The biggest mistake that many first-time visitors make is not allowing enough time. The island packs more than its weight when it comes to scenery and many roads are winding and slow. Our progress around the island was especially slow because there seemed to be another photo op practically everywhere we went. By all means see the famous sights, though the most enjoyable part of travelling here is just wandering the country roads to see what's around the next corner.

For more information, see the Tourism P.E.I. website tourismpei.com.

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The tiny but wildly colourful community of French River is one of the most photographed spots in the province, owing partly to the convenient hilltop viewpoint right beside the highway.



There are plenty of opportunities to get a close look at the province's natural beauty.

Health providers must communicate better with patients

HEALTH CLINIC



CLARE ROWSON, MD

Q: The doctor has suggested that my father get palliative care. He was sent to a hospice but I have just realized that he had no idea that "palliative care" meant that he was going to die soon and that it was just designed to make him comfortable in his last days. He thought it was some sort of treatment.

A: Communication is a two-way street. It involves someone expressing a thought and the other person receiving it by hearing it clearly and also understanding the meaning.

Barriers to clear communication include medical jargon, noise and other distractions, hearing or speech deficits, language, culture, and family dynamics. Dementia also affects a person's language, as well as interpretive skills.

Older people may use different words to describe something simple. An example would be my elderly mother describing a symptom as "feeling wobbly." That could mean dizziness, drowsiness or weakness and needs to be clarified.

Another word she liked to use was "muzzy." This could be at least partly cultural because she was English.

In medical school, we were given a list of common or colloquial words that patients frequently used to describe symptoms, along with the medical word that we would use. For example, "dizzy" could mean faintness or vertigo.

Even simple words can be confusing if not properly explained. I have heard of a patient who was told their cancer was progressing. She thought that meant that she was getting better, not that the cancer was growing and spreading to other organs. Someone else thought that a "positive" stress test meant that she had passed with

flying colours. Quite the opposite was true.

This situation is sometimes exacerbated by doctors who do not like to be the bearers of bad news and try to put an optimistic spin on everything. To avoid using the nasty word "cancer," some doctors will refer to "lesions" or "growths."

Prescriptions can also be misinterpreted. Twice a day sounds simple enough but does it mean morning and night or every 12 hours? Many patients are unaware that all prescriptions are dispensed using just four time slots. 8 a.m., noon, 6 p.m. and bedtime. They are not on a 24-hour clock.

Long and complicated medical terms like "cardiomyopathy" or

"thrombocytopenia" are not understood by most people unless they have medical or nursing training. They should be more clearly stated as "heart muscle disease" or "low platelets," respectively.

To make matters worse, many patients are reluctant to ask for a simple explanation for fear of sounding stupid. Hearing-impaired patients are less likely to ask for clarifications because they are sometimes not aware of how hearing impaired they are and many are reluctant to admit their problem or wear a hearing aid.

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