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Cover
May 12, 2003

Prince Edward County, Ont.

Life's a beach, with history

JONATHON GATEHOUSE

CONTRARY to popular belief, you *can* swim in Lake Ontario. Two and a half hours east of the Big Smoke, where the hills haven't yet been levelled for subdivisions and the six-lane highway curves away from the shore, there's a corner of Upper Canada with clean water, fresh breezes and the sound of crickets at night. The charms of **Prince Edward County** -- The County to those in the know -- aren't necessarily undiscovered, just overlooked. After all, it's been more than 220 years since the first settlers -- Loyalists fleeing the American Revolution -- put down stakes. And people have probably been seeking summer refuge along the area's bays and beaches for almost as long.

It's a haven for sunbathers. Sandbanks Provincial Park boasts three of the province's largest, nicest swimming areas as well as towering white dunes. And for those who prefer less crowded sands, The County's 800 km of shoreline provide countless alternatives.

History buffs will find their pleasure in the dozens of old public buildings and stately homes (many now converted to bed and breakfasts) that dot the communities along Highway 33 -- the Loyalist Parkway. Tourist authorities claim the area is second only to Williamsburg, Va., for its reminders of North America's colonial past. And many a long summer day can be frittered away exploring towns and villages like Wellington, Bloomfield and Picton, taking tea or shopping for antiques and gifts.

Deeper into the area's eastern reaches there are spectacular views to be had from the Lake on the Mountain, a geological oddity on a clifftop 62 m above the Bay of Quinte.

At Waupoos, on the southern shore, you can stop for a glass of adult apple juice at the County Cider Co., or taste some wine from the half-dozen vintners who now ply their trade in the area where German immigrants crushed some of Ontario's first grapes in the late 18th century. The old Black River Cheese factory in Milford burned down a couple of years back, but the new version still sells the same tangy cheddar, and ice cream cones big enough to keep the kids in the back seat quiet until sundown.

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Close to the city, but still governed by the rhythms of the country, **Prince Edward County** is the perfect place for a lazy week or weekend. But hurry -- judging by the growing number of Toronto four-by-fours parked at the A&P, it won't stay unspoiled for long.

WHERE TO STAY

- **TIMM'S GRANDVIEW MANOR** This elegant 1935 house, 26 km north of Picton, is among the dozens of charming B & Bs in The County.

800-538-9659 www.pec.on.ca/timms

- **ISIAH TUBBS RESORT** Ideal for family travellers, the West Lake facility has a pool, a private beach and a restaurant.

800-724-2393

WHERE TO EAT

- **THE CHIP WAGON OUTSIDE THE TAMBO VARIETY STORE** A visit to this venerable establishment, near the entrance to Sandbanks, is the perfect way to break up an afternoon at the beach.

- **THE WARING HOUSE** More sophisticated evening palates can be satiated at this restaurant on Highway 33, where the prime rib can be washed down with a pint in the cozy pub that's attached.

800-621-4956 www.pec.on.ca/waringhouse

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