

Canada: Nova Scotia & Cape Breton Island

Tour-Only Itinerary

Driving at your own pace along the famed Cabot Trail, you pause at a small fishing community for a chat with a friendly fisherman. Nearby, you browse craft studios, admiring quilts, paintings, and pottery, skills honed from English ancestors who settled here two centuries ago. Arriving at the Acadian Trail, you set off on a high coastal trail, your eyes sweeping across the stunning Chéticamp River valley, nearly 1,000 feet below, and on to the highlands. Continue to walk in the footsteps of history as you trace the former cart path carved by Acadian pioneers to Chéticamp. Tapping your foot to Cape Breton music as you relax at a local pub in the evening only gets your pulse pounding for the walking adventures that still lie ahead in the week to come.



Highlights

- Enjoy spectacular coastal views from the Skyline Trail, gazing down from headlands 1,000 feet above the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
- Indulge in a stay at the Keltic Lodge, an elegant seaside resort, and take advantage of its private beach, luxurious spa, and 18-hole golf course.
- Experience Cape Breton's fishing heritage in the Margaree River Valley.
- Delight in the freedom of having your own transportation as you explore the Cabot Trail by car and on foot.
- View waves crashing onto the rocky coast of Aspy Bay, one of Cape Breton's most dramatic coastal sights.



On all Self-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



A local representative
available 24/7.



Gracious accommodations
that are a clean, comfortable
home away from home.



Detailed maps & route notes
featuring turn-by-turn
directions and places of
interest.



Experts to handle all the
details, including moving
your luggage between hotels
while you're out exploring.



Scheduled taxi transfers to
bring you to and from each
day's walks.



Access to a Self-Guided
Flight Concierge—ask our
knowledgeable team to find
flights that sync with your
planned trip.



Delicious meals—many
are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Self-Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 3 to 7 miles per day and options available. The walks have elevation gains and losses up to 1,100 feet. Walking terrain includes dirt roads, gravel paths, and packed earth trails with roots and rocks in some places, mainly in the national park. Cape Breton's scenery is wild and seemingly untouched, ranging from deep forests to dramatic Atlantic coastal rocky shores with occasional sandy beaches, and from tiny fishing villages to bustling small towns that have conserved Scottish or Acadian culture. Opportunities for viewing

fauna and flora are ubiquitous—including whale-watching cruises out of several harbors or simply looking out to sea from a rocky promontory. Moose, bear, and bald eagles are not uncommon sights on the walks or drives. Remember: preparation is the key to ensuring your tour readiness; the more you walk or participate in aerobic exercise prior to your trip, the more you will enjoy your experience!

DAY 1

Your Canada: Nova Scotia & Cape Breton Island tour begins

Your destination today is the lovely town of Baddeck, in the heart of Cape Breton Island. It is the official starting and ending point of the Cabot Trail, the coastal road around the northern tip of the island. Completed in 1932, the Cabot Trail is named for the English explorer John Cabot, who first sighted the island in 1497, staking England's claim in North America. Baddeck is ideally situated on the northern shore of 60-mile-long Bras d'Or Lake. Alexander Graham Bell maintained his cherished summer home here for 37 years, and the nearby Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site houses a museum commemorating his work. Upon arrival, you can explore the town and its historical properties and shops, or relax at your charming inn.

DAY 2

Acadian Trail. Optional Walks: Le Chemin du Buttereau or Le Buttereau. Move on Day

5.8 miles, moderate, 1,150-ft. elevation gain and loss, with some steep sections. Optional walks: 4 miles, easy to moderate, 350-ft. elevation gain and loss OR 1.1 mile, easy to moderate, 150-ft. elevation gain and loss. Total driving time: 1.5-2 hours

This morning, begin your drive through the Margaree River Valley, passing through the small communities that call the valley home. Perhaps you'll consider fly-fishing in one of the local rivers or simply learning about the history of fishing in the area at the Salmon Museum. Make a visit to the shops and studios of renowned local crafters, including potters, painters, and quilters. Contributing to the area's culture are the Scottish tenant farmers, or crofters, who came to Cape Breton Island in the early 1800s. Cast out of their highland homes by the English, the crofters brought many of their traditions with them when they settled in Cape Breton.

Reaching Margaree Forks, continue north along the Cabot Trail, following the coast to reach the Cape Breton Highlands National Park, a truly stunning portion of the winding Cabot Trail. The Acadian Trail begins near the Chéticamp Visitor Center and rises almost 1,000 feet above the Chéticamp River. As you hike, admire panoramic views of the Acadian Coast, the river valley, and the park's highland interior. Follow the trail as it winds to the top of Burnt Mountain, making your way through thick blueberry bushes, keeping an eye out for evidence of bear and moose. Should you prefer an easier walk option—or an additional walk option—head further up the Cabot Trail to Le Buttereau Trailhead. Here, you retrace the steps of the Acadian pioneers who traveled this cart path from Le Buttereau (a small settlement of seven families) to Chéticamp. Choose from an easy out-and-back walk or a longer loop option.

Your home for the next two nights is the fishing village of Chéticamp, originally settled in the 1760s by exiled Acadians from the French territory farther south when it was surrendered to the English. This vibrant community has maintained its cultural roots, as you can see from the exquisite hooked rugs and other crafts. Here in Chéticamp, you may be able to catch a *ceilidh* of Cape Breton music and musicians at one of the local pubs.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3

Skyline Trail. Afternoon option: Corney Brook or whale watching excursion (at your own expense). Stay Put Day

5.8 miles, easy to moderate, 450-ft. elevation gain and loss. Afternoon option: 4 miles, easy to moderate, 400-ft. elevation gain and loss. Total driving time: 1 hour

This morning's walking route is the famous Skyline Trail, with its spectacular views from 1,000 feet above sea level. You don't have to climb the whole way, as the trail begins at about 950 feet and reaches a maximum of 1,300 feet. From the dramatic headland cliff, you can trace the Cabot Trail around the mountainsides, and, on a very clear day, you may be able to see the French archipelago of Les Îles de la Madeleine in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is not uncommon to sight whales in the water far below, and, along the trail, moose and eagles.

After a picnic lunch, you may choose to set off on an exciting whale-watching boat tour out of Chéticamp—humpback, minke, pilot, and fin whales are common in this Gulf corridor, known as the Cape Breton Trough. Alternatively, the Corney Brook trail follows a meandering brook through mixed hardwood

forest to a small waterfall—again, keep an eye out for moose, birds, and snowshoe hare.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4

Bog Trail. Lone Shieling Trail. Mica Hill. Move on Day

0.3 miles, easy. 0.4 miles, easy. 4.9 miles, easy. Total driving time: 2 hours

This morning, you have two easy (and very short) warm-up walks. The Bog trail takes you on a boardwalk through a highland plateau bog. Interpretive plaques along the way introduce you to the fascinating flora and fauna that make up the bog's unique ecosystem. The Lone Shieling loop trail begins at a historical crofter's hut and leads through a hardwood forest of sugar maple trees, some of which are 350 years old!

Continuing your drive along the northernmost part of the Cabot Trail to the White Point Trail, you'll find some of the most dramatic coastal scenery in Cape Breton. Reaching a grassy point, you'll gaze out to sweeping views of Aspy Bay, as waves crash on the rocky coast below. A small cemetery at the tip of the point dates to the settlement of this area in the late 1700s.

Return to the trailhead and continue to your day's destination, the award-winning Keltic Lodge Resort & Spa, located on a peninsula jutting into the Atlantic, with a backdrop view of Cape Smokey. Enjoy dinner tonight onsite, featuring a maritime-inspired menu and stunning ocean views.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5

Franey Mountain. Optional Walk: Clyburn Valley. Stay Put Day

4.7 miles, moderate with a challenging section, 1,050-ft. elevation gain and loss. Optional walk: 5.4 miles, easy, 400-ft. elevation gain and loss. Total driving time: 10 minutes

This morning, you may opt for the exhilarating walk up Franey Mountain, a steep and steady ascent through Acadian forest and a stand of hardwoods. Rising from sea level, your surroundings change to balsam fir, with trailing arbutus and pipsissewa underfoot. At Franey's peak, you are rewarded with a panoramic view of the open sea with Middle Head and Cape Smokey to the east, Money Point to the south, and the Clyburn Valley below.

Another walk available today (either instead of or in addition to your morning outing), is a path through Clyburn Valley at the base of Franey Mountain. This riverside walk takes you on a path through spectacular stands of hardwood trees; impressive boulders (some bigger than cars!); old, abandoned beaver ponds; verdant meadows; and fragrant apple trees. You'll pass the remains of an old gold mine—gold was never discovered in the area, and after years of fruitless effort, the mine finally closed in 1916.

Returning to your resort, you may opt for a dip in the heated outdoor pool, or enjoy the spa facilities. Those with more energy to burn may also choose to walk from the hotel on the Middle Head Trail that snakes along the cliff-bound peninsula that divides Ingonish Bay.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6

Your Canada: Nova Scotia & Cape Breton Island tour concludes

This morning, options include a relaxed stroll on the pink granite stones of Ingonish Beach, or perhaps a round of golf at the renowned Highland Links course, or indulging in the spa's offerings before departing for onward travels. (Golf and spa fees are not included in the tour price; advance reservations are required.)

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Tour Only

Boutique accommodations	✓
6 on-tour meals: 5 breakfasts and 1 dinner	✓
Ride with GPS (custom downloadable GPS route notes and turn-by-turn voice navigation; smartphone required)	✓
Orientation meeting or phone call with a Country Walkers representative	✓
Local representative available 24/7	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary: Cape Breton Highlands National Park Pass	✓
Note: Unlike most other Country Walkers Adventures, this trip requires guests to drive from destination to destination, either using your own vehicle or renting one (rental cost not included in tour price).	✓