



Cavendish Beach and Green Gables House are among the big attractions in Canada's smallest province.

The dos and don'ts of a successful vacation in — Prince Edward Island —

CHARLOTTETOWN — Reminiscences of Prince Edward Island's most appreciated tourist attraction:

In August 1984, two mainland reporters covering the federal election strolled down a busy Charlottetown street, when a man wearing a tuxedo and top hat rolled by on a unicycle.

Surprised no one turned to stare, one asked a local, "Who's that?"

"Oh, he's a candidate," came the local's reply, surprised that the question needed to be asked.

On another visit, saddled with an unco-operative portable computer terminal, I strolled into a local shop expecting the usual response: "Leave it with me and I'll look at it next week."

But no. The proprietor, a deliberately-moving man in his early 40s with bushy eyebrows and heavily-lined, leathery face, stopped his work and took out a screwdriver from a desk drawer.

"There's your problem," he said a few minutes later, pointing to the jumble of metal veins that to the technically illiterate makes as much sense as a road map of Hong Kong.

My appreciation must have sounded too effusive to the wise Fixer.

"Toronto's not the only place that's seen computers, you know," he said, a wry smile cracking his lips.

Visitors, 600,000 of them each summer, come to Canada's smallest and prettiest island province, for many reasons — the sun, the beaches, to re-live childhood memories in the home of Anne of Green Gables, for the lobster, for the tranquillity of countryside or quaint fishing villages — but they leave talking about the people.

According to out-surveys conducted by the provincial department of tourism, visitors named "the friendly people" top on the list of what they liked best about Charlottetown.

With this in mind, here's a guide of the dos and don'ts while on the Island.

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DON'T fly. Landing or taking off from the Charlottetown airport is the singularly most distressing aspect of visiting P.E.I. The planes are rarely on time, and its location is an uninspiring farmer's field.

DO take the ferry, either from Cape Tormentine, N.B. to Borden, P.E.I. or the longer route from Caribou, N.S. to Woods Island, P.E.I. During high season, it's best to arrive at the ferry terminal before 10 a.m. or after 6 p.m.

Taking the ferry is cheaper — less than \$15 for a family of four with automobile — crossings take 45 and 75 minutes respectively, and the Northumberland Strait is usually calm. Besides, you'll need a car once in P.E.I. and the pleasant sea voy-

age will give you an opportunity to start getting to know Islanders.

DON'T stay at the Prince Edward Hotel, a \$32-million concrete and steel mistake with all the charm of a Toronto office building. However, it is the most luxurious accommodations in the capital city, and for those who want to take the big city with them on their vacation, the 199-room hotel with indoor pool and sauna facilities, now operated by C.P. Hotels, will make you feel like you never left.

DO stay at the Charlottetown Hotel, a majestic structure at the centre of town, flanking a pleasant park.

Better yet, arrange to rest in one of the Island's hundreds of bed-and-breakfast tourist homes sprinkled throughout the countryside. Aside from the price — as little as \$15 a day, or \$80 a week — going this route allows you to, again, meet some of the "friendly people," who will regale you with stories of the Island, and acquaint you with a knowledgeable in-house guide for your travels.

DO tour by car. P.E.I. is only 225 km from tip to tip, 65 km across at its widest point, and with 3,700 km of paved road, is easily accessible by car.

"It's the only way to really see the Island," says Stan Woodman of the tourism department. "We've been living here 14 years and most Sundays, we just get in our car and drive. It's a beautiful place."

DO take in the beaches, the best and warmest waters that

can be found in Atlantic Canada. The shoreline of P.E.I. is endlessly varied with long, smoothed red and white sand beaches, nestled between remote jagged clay cliffs.

Popular beaches are Cavendish and Brackley on the P.E.I. National Park, which aside from endless camping grounds, the Dalvay by the Sea resort lodge and cottage facilities, is home to the Anne of Green Gables house. The park is located on the north shore, about 30 minutes drive from Charlottetown.

But with more than 800 km of sand beaches, travellers can find many isolated stretches of sand far from the madding crowds. Two of the best isolated beach areas are on the North Cape and at East Point.

A double **DO** is the lobster supper restaurants, available throughout the island in the summer. These vary from elegant dining to all-you-can-eat affairs for under \$15. (Although the lobster season is closed in July, most restaurants still offer fresh lobster from local pounds.)

There are also about three dozen outlets where visitors can purchase fresh fish and lobster. If you're enterprising, you can also buy seafood directly from fishermen as they dock in the evening.

When breaking open a pink lobster, take an opportunity to taste Old Abby draft, the first locally brewed beer in nearly a century. It has a slightly bitter, English beer taste.

While in Charlottetown, **DO** arrange to see Canada's longest-running musical, Anne of Green Gables, during the Charlottetown Festival, which runs from June 17 to Oct. 11.

DON'T wait until you get there to get tickets. Reserve seats by calling (902) 566-1267.

DON'T expect a lively nightlife. Charlottetown, while the capital and largest city on the Island, is really a little town of about 25,000 people — the Island population is 123,000 — hence, after-hour activities are limited.

DON'T try to emulate the local patois. Islanders may be friendly, but they don't appreciate being the butt of jokes. They especially don't like to be asked, "Have you ever been to sea, Billy?" to which they've practiced a rude rejoinder.

For the more active minded, the Island offers excellent stream and deep-sea fishing, water sports and lush golf courses.

But the main attraction, as out-surveys show, is that mystical experience called the Island Way, a sure-fire cure for racing pulse rates and high blood pressure.

— Julian Beltrame, Southam News

If you go . . .

CHARLOTTETOWN — If you're planning to go to Prince Edward Island, the best source of information is the Visitor Services office in Charlottetown (902) 892-2457.

For brochures, write P.O. Box

940 (Royalty Mall), Charlottetown, P.E.I. C1A 7M5.

For information on seafood outlets, call (902) 892-3493.

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