

## The Cabot Trail, Nova Scotia

Words: Kate Robertson

➔ Windows down, fave playlist cued, new world rolling by. Nothing beats an epic road trip. With the most stunning seascapes and scenery imaginable, the 300km Cabot Trail in Nova Scotia is one of the most iconic in Canada.

So, fly into Sydney, Cape Breton Island's largest city, rent a car and start your voyage. Give yourself five days, because you won't want to just get in your car and drive.

The Gaels, immigrants from Scotland, settled Cape Breton as early as the 1700s and still form half the island's population. Explore this cultural history at the Gaelic College, just past the quaint village of Baddeck, to learn about their traditions, such as bagpipe and fiddle playing, step-dancing and kilt-making.

If you're a water baby, at the nearby North River Kayak Tours you can go for a paddle on the briny river towards the open Atlantic. Keep your eyes open for bald eagles, or if you're lucky, sea lions.

Next, start the loop north, where you will pass along the coastline, through small fishing villages and over mountain passes to Highlands National Park. You'll likely spot a majestic moose or two along the way, and, if your timing is right, minke or pilot whales.

Pull out your hiking boots and have fun searching for the giant red Adirondack chairs hidden by Parks Canada staff in awe-inspiring locations along the trails. A local favourite is Skyline Trail, where beautiful boardwalks take you over fragile headland plants for a stunning view of coastline as far as the eye can see and the mighty Gulf of St Lawrence.

In Cheticamp, visit the Centre de la Mi-Careme ('mid-Lent' in French) to learn about the age-old history of this celebration, which still happens here

**“The Cabot Trail is one of Canada's most iconic road trips.”**

every year when residents make masks and disguise themselves from head to toe. Down the road, browse whimsical folk art at the Sunset Art Gallery.

On the lower end of the island at Point Michaud Beach, see why the island is making a name for itself in the surfing world. The Summer Surf Program offers

lessons and wetsuit rentals, a must for the cold water.

Of course, one of the best parts of a road trip is trying the food along the way. Fish and seafood are top-notch, and in-the-know chefs say Cape Breton lobster is the best in the world (in season May to July – just one of the reasons the best time to drive The



➤ CLOCKWISE FROM THIS IMAGE: Descending the Skyline Trail at Cape Breton National Park; Cape Breton lobster is a local specialty; the Acadian flag features on the Cheticamp Harbour Lighthouse; The Cabot Trail weaves through coastal Nova Scotia; spy bald eagles on the North River.



Photo: Getty Images, © Destination Cape Breton Association.

Cabot Trail is from early summer to early autumn; activities and accommodations can also be closed at other times of the year). Visit Baddeck Lobster Suppers for a traditional feast.

But what makes The Cabot Trail especially memorable are the locals, dubbed 'Capers', who are passionate about their island and the history. In fact, they're so friendly, don't be surprised if you get invited to a ceilidh (pronounced 'kay-li'), an impromptu kitchen party where local Celtic musicians get together and jam.

All definitely worth stopping the car for. ➤

