

A Great Place!

Running from the tip of the Bruce Peninsula down to the rolling hills of the province's southwest, this region combines the wild and the pastoral. It is bordered on one side by the cold, clear waters of Lake Huron and on the other side by the Niagara Escarpment, a world-renowned piece of geological history in our own backyard. What lies between these two impressive natural boundaries varies a great deal from place to place.

At the top of the Bruce, there is a distinctly northern environment of rock, trees and water, but with a style all its own. Limestone cliffs plunge into the crystal clear waters of Georgian Bay while gnarled, ancient cedars cling to the cliff faces. The scenery is breathtaking and the environment is as remarkable as it is fragile – dozens of orchid species shelter in the deep green forests or flaunt their beauty in open fens and marshes. Delicate ferns grow in the fissures and tiny soil pockets worn into the rock and wildflowers grace the forest floor.

As the escarpment turns east at the base of the peninsula, the often rough farmland of Grey-Bruce unfolds. This area represents one of the wilder corners of the settled southern Ontario landscape, with still-intact forests, bogs and many wetlands. Running through it are rich river valleys like the Beaver and Saugeen, while outside the valleys the hilly, broken terrain of much of the area makes for good cover for wild animals.

The Lake Huron Beaches from the top of the Bruce down through Kincardine and southward are immensely popular in the summer months; this area boasts a thriving tourist trade. But more and more visitors are also taking the time to appreciate the area's natural character, from the tough grasses found in shifting shoreline dune systems to the many shorebirds attracted to these shallow waters and sandy strands. While watching sanderlings and other sandpipers scurry along the wet sand, visitors should also keep an eye out for bald eagles.

At the southern end of this region are rich farmlands on gently rolling to almost flat terrain. At the extreme south, the naturally dominant Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest begins to blend with the Carolinian forests of the province's deep south and southern tree species such as bitternut hickory, blue beech and sycamore can occasionally be found.

Explorers can begin discovering this region by walking sections of the Bruce Trail, which follows the Niagara Escarpment. The character of the trail changes dramatically, from the rich deciduous forests of the south to the rocky evergreen outcrops of the rugged Bruce Peninsula. The Bruce also boasts Canada's only national marine park – Fathom Five – as well as Bruce Peninsula National Park and a number of Federation nature reserves. Further south there are a number of provincial parks to explore, including MacGregor Point, Inverhuron and Point Farms.

One of the largest intact examples of Great Lakes forest can be found in this area. The Kinghurst Forest, donated to Ontario Nature by Howard and Bruce Krug, is now a 280-hectare nature reserve just west of Chesley.