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Space for Leisure

FROM SUNRISE out of the Atlantic to sunset behind the Pacific coastal mountains, every day is a day of beauty in Canada's National Parks.

There are many sorts of beauty, from the majesty of a rugged cliff defying the ocean in Newfoundland to the grandeur of a peak piercing the clouds in British Columbia; from the riot of Indian paint brush alongside a trail in the Rockies to the pale wild rose clinging to its mite of earth on the Bay of Fundy; from the eight- or fifteen-note song of the Canada warbler in the forest clearings of Ontario to the bass honking of geese on the western sloughs.

The national parks, of which we will soon have nineteen, are not merely for those who happen to live near them: they are national domain, set aside by the Parliament of Canada for all the people. The National Parks Act reads: "The parks are hereby dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment... and such parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

Keeping in touch with nature is increasingly needful. Ancient scourges of the human race have gone, but new ones are appearing: and the greatest of these is the cutting of the umbilical cord linking man with the rest of nature.

Since a hundred years ago man has made greater material advance than in all the rest of his existence. In doing so, he has replaced the fragrance of forests and fields by the smell of combustion engines and the reek of factories; he has overrun the wilderness and has hemmed himself into canyons of buildings; he has swamped his senses with impressions utterly foreign to the natural way of life. As Fred Bodsworth wrote in *The Ontario Naturalist*: "If we go on as we are, we will destroy in the next century everything that the poets have been singing about for the past two thousand years."

The nature parks of Canada provide inviolate spots where arrogant man has not yet intruded his modernity. They are part of the original face of Canada. They show us the world's primeval forces.

Our problem

We face the problem of providing all the varied open space and recreational needs of people who live in cities and towns.

We do not have to live in slums to be deprived of the privileges of nature. People who fled from cluttered city streets to the suburbs twenty-five years ago are now again facing other people's windows. They are searching once more for open spaces.

The national parks are not intended to fill every recreational need or interest, but rather those which provide rest, knowledge, enjoyment of nature and inspiration.

It is the tendency of our machine civilization to wipe out every trace of what was once primitive wilderness. There is a certain impiety in this destructiveness, as well as the moral illegality of using now what belongs to the future.

The preservation of natural land is essential to civilization. Only by understanding natural laws which govern soils, plants and animals, and their interrelations, can man devise the best methods of land management, agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry. The nature reserve is a control area, where natural changes can be compared with man-made changes.

Nature reserves are urgently needed in Canada, but such as we have are under pressure for use as sports and recreation centres. "Part of the remedy", said J. A. MacDonald, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, in a statement to the Standing Committee on Northern Affairs and National Resources in February, "is more national parks; the other part is more parks and recreation areas of other kinds to satisfy the needs of people who want more formalized recreational activities."

We would need forty to sixty new national parks in the ultimate system, Mr. MacDonald said. The acquisition programme should be complete by the year 2000, but 1985 should be the target date if elements essential to the system are not to be lost.

Self-renewal

Something goes wrong with man when he cuts himself off from the natural world. That is why we have such a yearning for nature that we tend flower boxes in our windows, and cultivate gardens, and grow house plants, and keep dogs and cats and goldfish and canaries.

We have not bridged the gap between our present way of life and our long past. Man, being unprepared for the machine age, is beset by nostalgia and frustrations. He goes to the national parks to renew his touch with the land from which he came, to draw strength from it, to ponder its mysteries.

A park gives us a chance to show that we are not afraid to walk and think alone. Here is our proper setting: a place where every scent, every sight, every sound, insists on normality. In the clear air of the big parks we feel stingingly alive.

There is also serenity to be found. Here a man has the feeling, as the artist Walter J. Phillips puts it so perceptively, "of having come to the place for which he has secretly longed, or of having found something he had lost, lost perhaps unaware."

As you walk through a forested park you notice all sorts of things. An old fallen tree shows a wide range of activity as insects and fungi prepare the humus in readiness to start building the forest anew.

Here and there you find open glades with flowers. You keep hoping that you will come upon a clearing just at the time when the wild flowers are holding the carnival for which they were obviously designed.

But the flowers are everywhere, not only in sheltered forest clearings. In the high mountain country there is a season-long profusion of bloom so impatient that the plants scarcely wait until spring comes: the frail anemone chases the snow up the mountain slopes. Mountain plants show us how modest the requirements can be for the sustenance of life, how great the adaptability, how severe the difficulties that it is possible to surmount.

Every type of Canadian wild animal life can be found in one or other of the parks. The sight of an animal in its native environment is a thrilling experience: a moose wading in a salt-lick; a black bear fishing in a forest pool; a mother skunk with her train of black-and-white youngsters; a common red squirrel burying a nut; a cony of the rocks cheeking you and somersaulting underground before you can reply; mountain sheep silhouetted against the sky.

Bird life is abundant in the parks, from the bald eagle soaring over Cape Breton Island where its forefathers have nested for centuries, to the fool hens quietly clucking to one another as they move out of your way into the underbrush in the West.

All these have their household and family anxieties, just as do human beings. They must make a livelihood, get along with their neighbours, raise their families, solve difficult problems of living space and

of subsistence. To sit on a log and consider a warbler's worries instead of your own can be a revealing and comforting experience.

The western parks are full of mountains. Edward Whymper, who made the first ascent of the peak named after him, said of the Rockies and the Selkirks that they were "sixty Switzerlands in one". And John Muir, one of the United States pioneer naturalists, wrote: "Thousands of nerve-shaken overcivilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home."

To climb a little way into the High Country — the land lying between the height of timber growth and the base of the crags — is to feel that you are nearer to the constellations above than to the workaday world below.

What do the National Parks offer?

This survey can tell only a little about what the national parks have to offer. For full information, write to the Director, National and Historic Parks Branch, Ottawa.

Anyone interested in the geological features of the parks, simply and interestingly explained, may obtain copies of little books, profusely illustrated, written by David M. Baird and distributed by the Queen's Printer, Ottawa, and Canadian Government bookshops. There are nearly a dozen available, each devoted to one park, ranging in price from 75¢ to \$2.

The National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada, a private, educational, non-profit organization, is devoted to promoting the benefits and ensuring the protection of parks. The address is 43 Victoria Street, Toronto 1, Ontario.

Newfoundland. Terra Nova National Park, 153 square miles, is an area of typical coastal country, having a rugged coastline with headlands hugging sheltered bays. You can see the result of hundreds of thousands of years of slow sedimentation, or place your hand on glacial scratches that were made on the rock 20,000 years ago. Moose and black bear are quite common, and marine birds are abundant: dovekies, black ducks, terns, geese and loons.

Prince Edward Island. "The Island" has been synonymous with beauty ever since Jacques Cartier wrote in his journal on July 1, 1534 that the trees "are wonderfully beautiful and very fragrant".

Superb sandy beaches are the principal features of the national park, which extends for 25 miles along the shore. The air temperature is ideal; the water, warmed by the Gulf Stream, rarely dips below seventy degrees Fahrenheit, and is only fifty feet deep at a distance of ten miles from shore. Near Cavendish Beach is Green Gables, immortalized in the novels of Lucy Maud Montgomery.

Nova Scotia. Cape Breton Highlands National Park, traversed by the magnificent Cabot Trail, occupies 370 square miles between the Atlantic and

the Gulf of St. Lawrence. In some places its cliffs tower 1,500 feet above the sea.

At Ingonish Beach, site of the park headquarters and centre of recreational activities, you will find a salt-water beach with golden sand — and a few yards away Freshwater Lake, cut off from the sea by a dyke of sand and gravel. Inland are deep valleys, green slopes, and rounded summits broken by rocky spires, reminiscent of the Highlands of Scotland.

In south-west Nova Scotia, a new national park is in the making. An area of 150 square miles of lake, stream and forest centred around Kejimikujik Lake, near Maitland Bridge, has been acquired by the Nova Scotia Government and is being transferred to federal jurisdiction.

New Brunswick. All Canada's parks have distinctive natural beauty, and in none is this more evident than in Fundy National Park. It skirts the Bay of Fundy for eight miles and extends inland for nine miles, with numerous coves and inlets. The tides of the Bay, known all over the world for their swiftness and height, have worn and carved the sandstone cliffs into sculptured masses of rugged grandeur. Tumbling waters in several swift rivers and streams add to the scenic beauty.

Ontario has three national parks: St. Lawrence Islands, Georgian Bay Islands, and Point Pelee, which is on Lake Erie. The first is made up of a dozen islands among the many hundreds in the great river.

Point Pelee beaches provide not only a cool place in summer but an ideal location for examining many of nature's interesting processes and creatures. This is the most southern point of mainland in Canada, at the same latitude as northern California. The climate is mild, contributing to the growth of plants and animals not found elsewhere in Canada. A profusion of wild birds thrives in the inland marshes.

The Georgian Bay Islands offer shoreline scenery as their principal attraction to the holiday visitor, but their rocks and boulders are of interest to geologists. Flowerpot Island has pillars of rock sculptured by the waves, which are cutting new "flowerpots" out of the adjoining cliff.

Manitoba. On the fringe of the Great Plains region, Riding Mountain National Park occupies a vast plateau which rises to 2,200 feet above sea level. Its area of 1,148 square miles is heavily forested, inhabited by deer, elk, moose and bear. There is a herd of buffalo in a fenced tract of 2,000 acres.

Wild flowers grow in great profusion and blossom in a bouquet of colour. There are song birds and birds of brilliant plumage. Bridle paths lead to interesting spots, and a promenade 8,000 feet long borders the beach of Clear Lake.

Saskatchewan. Prince Albert National Park has 1,500 square miles of lake and forest, rich with memories of nomadic Indians and explorers, fur trappers and traders. It has splendid white sand beaches.

Lavallée Lake is the nesting ground of the American white pelican and the double-crested cormorant. On the shore of Lake Ajawaan can be seen the site of the cabin where Grey Owl, that mystery man who wrote so interestingly about nature, lived and was buried. The beach at Lake Waskesiu is 1½ miles long.

Alberta. Banff sulphur springs first came to attention in 1883, when three prospectors slid down a rope into a natural cave where they found a steaming lake of emerald hue. They staked a claim, hoping to commercialize their find, but the Minister of the Interior had other ideas: he bought the claim for the nation. Today the park covers 2,564 square miles.

Banff National Park has many lakes, big and small, but all beautiful. Moraine Lake, colourful and luminous, is enclosed in the majestic Valley of the Ten Peaks. Lake Louise, an artist's dream of composition and many shades, is a canvas painted by nature in one of her grandest moods. The Indians called Mirror Lake "The Goats' Looking Glass", because the mountain goats went there to comb their beards. A short distance away is Lake Agnes, lying in a bare little rocky pocket chiselled out by a glacier.

The view from Little Beehive, 7,100 feet, rising between these two lakes, is beyond description, and one does not have to be a skilled alpinist to enjoy it. With a wide angle lens the photographer can record a breath-taking scene. Lake Agnes with its circle of colossal peaks; the Bridal Veil falls tumbling into Mirror Lake, thence into Lake Louise, 1,000 feet lower.

Things do not have to be massive in order to be interesting. Students in the photography class at the Banff School of Fine Arts are sent out by nature-wise and talented instructor W. V. Crich, F.R.P.S., to pace out patches of hillside fifteen feet square and to search there for things to photograph. It is not at all difficult to fill a film with twenty photographs of lovely flowers, mosses, lichens, ants, and other creatures.

A comfortable highway, 142 miles long, connects Banff and Jasper over a route that not so many years ago entailed an arduous trail trip of three weeks. Jasper National Park has sublime mountain scenery filling its 4,200 square miles. In the icefield where the two parks come together, David Baird tells us in his guide book, there is one place where the drainage flows in three directions. A single drop of rain may split into parts that end up in the Arctic, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans after flowing for thousands of miles in three different river systems.

The Columbia icefield sends tongues of ice into valleys on several sides. The Athabasca glacier flows at about fifty feet a year. Visitors may explore it in snowmobiles, stepping out on the glacier to peer into crevasses and dip fingers into tiny streams. The minute particles of sediment carried by these streams cause the pale green or turquoise colour in the mountain lakes.

In the south-west of Alberta is Waterton Lakes National Park, which adjoins the United States Glacier Park. Together, these parks form the International Peace Park, so designated in 1932. A feature of Waterton is Cameron Creek, noted for its rainbow trout and its picturesque falls.

Alberta has a fourth national park and a share of a fifth. Elk Island, near Edmonton, was the first to be set apart primarily as a wild-animal preserve. There are two fenced areas totalling 75 square miles, containing a large herd of buffalo, besides deer, elk and moose.

Far to the north, partly in Alberta and partly in the Northwest Territories, is Wood Buffalo, the largest national park in the world, with an area of 17,300 square miles. It provides an ideal home for the biggest remaining herds of bison, which at the turn of the century were in danger of extinction. It is a nesting ground of the whooping crane.

British Columbia. Kootenay National Park extends about five miles on each side of the Vermilion-Sinclair section of the Banff-Windermere highway for a distance of 60 miles. It has deep canyons, spectacular waterfalls, an iceberg lake and mineral hot springs, besides being a noted wildlife sanctuary.

Descending by wide hairpin curves, the road enters the narrow valley of the Sinclair River. As Mabel B. Williams writes in her book *The Heart of the Rockies*, "the mountains folding together until the road has scarcely room for its feet."

Passing between the Iron Gates, impressive towers of red rock, the highway reaches Radium Hot Springs where the water emerges from the rocks at about 116 degrees Fahrenheit and flows through swimming and bathing pools.

At the Great Divide in Kicking Horse Pass, where the highway from Banff enters Yoho National Park, the panorama is awe-inspiring.

The Kicking Horse River, a wild broncho of a river fed by melting glaciers, pours through a small hole in the rocks at Natural Bridge. It roars beside the highway in a succession of mad rushes from rock to rock. Then, dramatically, at a turn in the road, is Takakkaw Falls, a glorious curtain of milky green water and lacy spray leaping over a vertical cliff a thousand feet high.

Emerald Lake, with Mount Burgess as a backdrop — this is the mountain that has been on the back of Canada's ten-dollar bills for many years — is one of the most lovely lakes to be found anywhere. It is said that in its depths you may count twenty shades of green at one time. A nature trail encircles the lake, winding through tall spruce trees.

Mount Revelstoke and Canada's Glacier National Parks are set among the Selkirk mountains, older than the Rockies and worn down by the thumb of time.

From some peaks in Glacier Park more than a hundred glaciers can be seen, their tongues pushing down the valleys until their melting equals their forward movement.

The slopes of the mountains are clothed by luxuriant pine forests, and softened by smiling valleys, by airy veils of waterfalls, by uplands made brilliant by millions of flowers, and by magically tinted lakes.

There is a road to the top of Mount Revelstoke, where a lookout point offers a wonderful view of rolling alpine landscape at altitudes of more than 6,000 feet.

There are foot trails from the lookout, and near by is the "Ice Box", a great cleft in the rock, which usually contains a mass of snow and ice, even in midsummer.

Those are the national parks. In addition there are provincial parks. Some of these, particularly in Quebec, are wilderness areas. Others are smaller areas of scenic or other interest, or are designated as recreational or camping and picnic sites.

The fact that Quebec has no national park, and Ontario only three small national parks, is explained by the constitution of Canada which gives the provinces control of natural resources. Long before the western provinces were established, the federal government held exclusive authority over all the lands and other natural resources and, with great foresight, turned the most scenic areas of the mountains and forests into national parks.

Why have parks?

To one who is bored by the routine of vacation resorts, the national parks beckon. In the High Country of the western mountains or on the sea-level beaches of the east, there is an infinite variety of sights and thoughts. There are active programmes for some, contemplative opportunities for many, and glimpses of beauty for all.

The person who wants to see something different for a change can draw without paying interest on the inexhaustible fund offered by the parks. Nature holds out a welcoming hand to every sort of landscape and sea-scape, and in the national parks she provides sanctuaries for human beings. But it is human beings who must preserve and extend them.

An Old Testament prophet warned long ago: "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth."

And Shakespeare wrote, in *Much Ado About Nothing*:

"For it so falls out
That what we have we prize not to the worth
Whiles we enjoy it; but being lacked and lost,
Why, then we rack the value, then we find
The virtue, that possession would not show us
Whiles it was ours."