





Weekend Picnics in the County – Great picnic hotspots in Prince Edward County *by Melody Wren*

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One of my favourite pleasures as spring turns to summer is going on a picnic. Lazing on a picnic blanket, with the sun glowing through my closed eyelids, the wind caressing my sleepy skin, Feasting on freshly made sandwiches, delicious strawberries and a glass of cider or lemonade, the calls of the birds, the smells of the country and a view of breathtaking natural beauty in the background. Where better to enjoy such pleasures than the rural landscape of Prince Edward County, which is awash with fabulous spots for a relaxing, tranquil picnic, some right under your nose and some off the beaten track? The area is home to five provincial parks and numerous conservation areas, as well as many beautifully landscaped parks. Once the crisp days of fall arrive, picnics are still a treat, by simply adding a layer of clothing and a thermos of tea or soup.

Often on holiday, we end up charging around fearful of missing "major visitor attractions", and in doing so we can fail to value our very surroundings. Revisit the balance and allow yourself to be tempted to leisurely discover the real Prince Edward County, its food, countryside and, most importantly, its natural beauty. If you're having a picnic en route, it only takes a few extra minutes to turn off the main road and find a pretty lane, wooded area, a field, or park to picnic in. A few minutes' drive down a side road or concession can turn a simple sandwich and a drink into a special outing — or make the picnic itself the purpose of the outing. In either case, Prince Edward County provides you with plenty of choice in destinations. Even if some of the sites are a little tricky to find, I think you will agree that they are well worth the extra effort — if only for the tranquility and remarkable views they offer.



If it is beach, water and stunning coastline you are looking for, you don't need to look further than Sandbanks Provincial Park. One of the most popular parks in Ontario, it offers three white sand beaches, enormous sand dunes, limestone cliffs, and places to picnic. Bring along your hiking shoes and walk off your picnic by taking in one of several trails, or if you have a kayak or canoe with you, paddle up the Outlet into East

Lake, take a right and you may see some of the swans that live in a quiet marshy corner of the lake. On certain summer dates, the park also has evening entertainment in the form of music, trivia challenges and plays, so pack some wine and stay well into the evening. The more intrepid can even pack a tent, a bag of logs and a guitar and camp out overnight on one of 500-plus campsites.

If a glorious panorama appeals, why not take your picnic hamper to the top of a cliff? Point Petre (pronounced "Point Peter" by locals), the southernmost tip of Prince Edward County, is a wonderfully scenic spot near Cherry Valley. A favourite for picnics and swimming, it features the Point Petre Lighthouse, built in 1833. The dramatic coastal area of Point Petre has limestone cliffs, meadow and mixed hardwoods. Lay your picnic blanket in a sun-dappled meadow and roam the nature reserve. The enclosed marsh on the north is off Soup Harbour. This is part of a large Federal nature reserve, well known as a birder's paradise and home to 337 species of aquatic and land birds. It also just happens to be one of the largest great blue heron spots in Ontario. From its Lake Ontario shoreline with limestone beaches to its plains containing ancient trees and a large deer population, as well as its large lagoons and marshes, Point Petre is natural, seemingly untouched and diverse.



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Just a few kilometres away along Army Reserve Road and Hilltop Road, is another high spot – literally. Little Bluff has astounding panoramic views of Prince Edward Bay from soaring limestone cliffs overlooking the rugged shorelines of Lake Ontario. Take your binoculars to catch a glimpse of some interesting birds as they hunt for food in the bushes and hardwoods that hug the edge of the 20-metre cliff. There is a rock beach for swimming, picnic areas and fire pits. It is usually rather quiet and private, making it perfect for a romantic picnic for two. Indulge in a spot of post-picnic hiking on the interesting (but not arduous) trails, or take a dip in the lake.

Hunting for history and rocks? Lakeshore Lodge, is an ancient property with views over Wellington Bay, and along the sand dunes. A woodland fishing station on the site was used between 600A.D. to 1500 A.D., and the lodge itself was built in 1879 on the shore of Wellington Bay on limestone ledges, near the point where the high sand dunes began. By the turn of the century, the lodge was one of the leading holiday destination resorts in Ontario. The Ministry of Natural Resources acquired the property in 1972. In 1983 while redevelopment of the lodge was being considered, the building burned down. The site now reveals only the foundation ruins of the lodge and the dance pavilion, as well as its stone entry gates. Picnic on the rocks, and hike around the sprawling property afterwards.

Tie a picnic in with a visit to a couple of vineyards, and enjoy a snack under the bridge. People often visit Karlo Estates Vineyard to picnic on or under Canada's largest drystone bridge. Make sure to take your camera to photograph the stunningly picturesque bridge as well as the vineyards. There is a breathtaking view of the vineyards from the top of the high bridge of both Karlo Estates and Hubbs Creek Vineyards. The bridge made from drystone construction is built from 45 tones of chocolate limestone quarried locally. Drystone construction differs from traditional masonry in that it uses no mortar. It has an overall length of 40 feet with a 12 foot arch spanning Hubbs Creek.

If you crave the unusual, be sure to take a picnic to Lake on the Mountain Provincial Park, designed for picnickers, this provincial park is a dramatic spot to stop with wonderful views of the Bay and Glenora ferries. If you can only visit one park in the area, this is the one to go to, as it features a natural phenomenon: the County's highest lookout point, and one of the province's most mysterious lakes. Defying all geographical and geological theory, the freshwater lake perched 62 metres above the Bay of Quinte has a flow of clean water from no visible water source. Picnic tables at the lookout point overlook the lake and surrounding countryside.



Many of my weekends this spring, summer and fall will be spent picnicking. Perhaps we'll meet at one of these beautiful spots in PEC.

Photos by Peggy DeWitt

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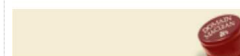
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