

THE WANDERER

AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST RV CLUB MAGAZINE

AUTUMN ESCAPES



Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia
cmca.au

MARCH 2025 | VOLUME 40. NO. 3

CANADA | VICTORIA | SOUTH AUSTRALIA | NORTHERN TERRITORY

CANADA'S WILD SIDE

**Waterfalls, rugged wilderness and wildlife
– Cape Breton continues to surprise
regardless of when you visit, but autumn is
when it puts on one of nature's best shows.**

WORDS LOLA AUGUSTINE BROWN,
PICS LOLA AUGUSTINE BROWN AND ADAM HILL.

It had been pelting with rain all day, but as we crested French Mountain on the Cabot Trail the rain stopped, and the sunshine set the mist aglow.

We're driving through clouds right now," I call over my shoulder to my three kids in the back of the RV. "Whoah," said six-year-old Rocco. "What do clouds taste like?" asked eight-year-old Carmelo.

I pulled the RV into a handy lookout (although the clouds were so thick we could barely see more than a few metres ahead). "Want to find out?"

We piled out of the RV and my boys tried munching at the clouds; their 15-year-old sister, Perdida, laughing at their efforts.

The 298-kilometre Cabot Trail loops around the mountainous Cape Breton Highlands National Park, and is

widely considered to be one of the most beautiful drives in the world.

When I told friends that I was going to drive around Cape Breton in a 10-metre RV for a week with my family, the general response was along the lines of,

"Aren't you scared to drive something that big?"

Nah, I assured them, no sweat.

Driving the hairpin turns of French Mountain, clutching the steering wheel tight as rain lashed the sides of the motorhome with windscreen wipers on turbo, I'll admit I was a little concerned. But, at no point did our motorhome feel out of control. Driving it was pretty easy, even backing it into places was okay, and our RV trip was our "best vacation ever" according to my kids.

THE NUTS
AND BOLTS

We rented an RV through CanaDream for our trip, choosing its Class C Maxi Motorhome which had a queen bed in the bedroom at the back, twin bunks above the cab, and a dinette that converts into a (short but fine for a six-year-old) bed.

The RV had a decent-sized kitchen with an ample fridge/ freezer, stove and microwave, and a bathroom complete with shower. We opted for the convenience kits (an extra cost) so the kitchen came equipped with pots, pans, cutlery and everything else we needed. We filled every drawer and cubby of the well-designed RV with books, games and toys, then set off with our seven-day itinerary in hand, our first night booked at the Inverness Beach Village.

This was the only RV site booking we made... which turned out to be wise because although we had some glorious sunny days on our trip, we also had a lot of rain and wind (not uncommon in autumn on rugged Cape Breton Island). This meant we had to move things around to make our whale watching trip in Ingonish happen after it was too choppy to go out the day we'd booked.

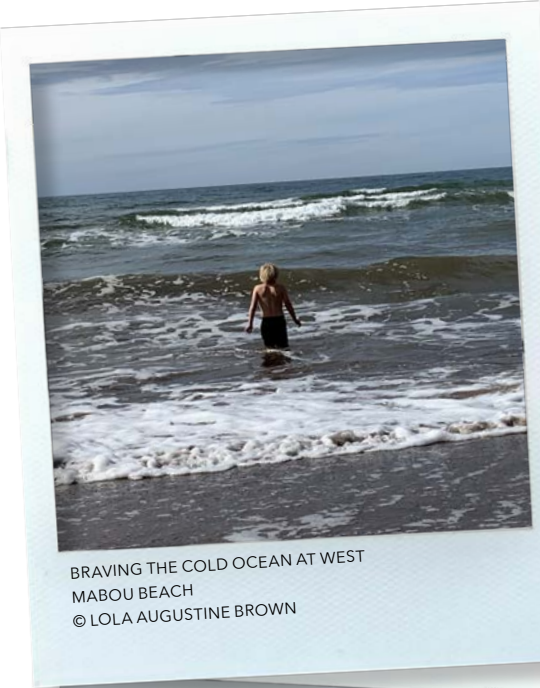


DRIVING THROUGH THE CLOUDS ON
FRENCH MOUNTAIN
© LOLA AUGUSTINE BROWN

GOLDEN SANDS
AND
LOBSTER ROLLS

All around Cape Breton are spectacular beaches. Our first beach stop was at West Mabou Beach, a huge sandy bay fringed by dunes and red clay cliffs, with barely anyone else on it. My boys stripped to their underpants and ran straight into the gentle surf - though it was too chilly for me and their dad to go in too deep. Inverness Beach Village is right on a golden sand beach perfect for windy strolls, pocketing bright polished remnants of beach glass as you go. Just across the street is Route 19 Brewing Tap and Grill which has fantastic craft beer and delicious pub food (the lobster rolls we had there were huge).

At the Hideaway Campground and Oyster Market in Dingwall, we bought a dozen oysters on the half-shell with all the trimmings and enjoyed them with a local craft beer before we'd even hooked up the RV. Parks Canada's Broad Cove Campground in Ingonish was quiet and leafy with lots of biking and hiking trails, adjacent to a sweet beach teeming with seabirds. There are lots of things to do in Ingonish so it's worth spending a few days there. Salty Rose's and the Periwinkle Cafe is a charming restaurant with an attached gallery showcasing local artisans; they serve great coffee, baked treats and decadent lobster rolls.



BRAVING THE COLD OCEAN AT WEST
MABOU BEACH
© LOLA AUGUSTINE BROWN



A BLUSTERY WALK ALONG INGONISH BEACH
© LOLA AUGUSTINE BROWN



ARE YOU rvSafe?

Missed an episode?
Stream now on



WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS AND EPIC HIKES

There's a high probability of spotting moose as you drive the trail, especially in autumn, but we didn't spot one (and at two metres tall, they're hard to miss). Nor did we see a whale when we went out looking for them with Keltic Express Zodiac Adventures in Ingonish, but we did see three massive ocean sunfish (also known as common mola, the largest bony fish in the world, weighing as much as 2.5 tonnes) one of which came right up to the boat giving us all big thrills. Just before heading out on the boat, we ate mussels on a cliff top at the Chowder House in Neil's Harbour, followed by overstuffed crab sandwiches on white bread.

There are hikes all along the Cabot Trail, and although we skipped the most famous - the Skyline Trail - because the weather was iffy, we loved hiking out to Gypsum Mines in Cheticamp to view the flooded gypsum quarry. After, we feasted on roasted chicken topped poutine - the traditional Quebec dish of chips smothered in gravy and cheese curds - at Mr Chicken... and it was delicious.

Cheticamp is home to the Island's Acadian community (descendants of the French who settled in what's now Nova Scotia in the 1600s), so expect signage in French, and check out Les Trois Pignons museum to learn about this unique culture and see a lot of hooked rugs - there are a lot of "hookers" on Cape Breton - as they cheekily call themselves - and the rugs make fun souvenirs to take home.

Hiking the Cape Smokey Trailhead gave us the classic Cape Breton views you see in the tourism ads, and my kids picked tiny, sweet wild blueberries along the way. When you're in Inverness at the start of the trail, stop at Egypt Falls in Margaree - it's one of Cape Breton's most spectacular waterfalls and an easy two-kilometre round-trip hike.

Cape Breton is gorgeous year-round, but visiting in autumn is especially beautiful and lets you enjoy every sweeping vista, restaurant and nature sight without the summer crowds. For families, it's a destination that has plenty of old-fashioned charm; and a chance to run free in one of the most accessible, and still wild, Canadian landscapes.



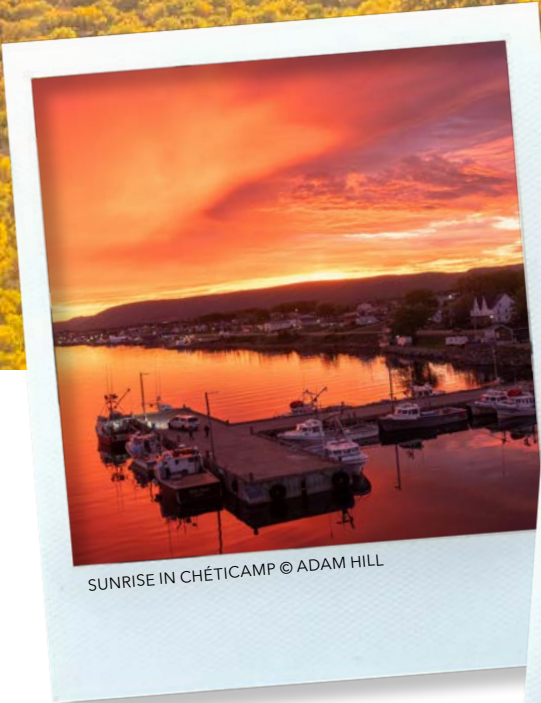
SPOTTING A SUNFISH ON OUR ZODIAC TOUR
© LOLA AUGUSTINE BROWN



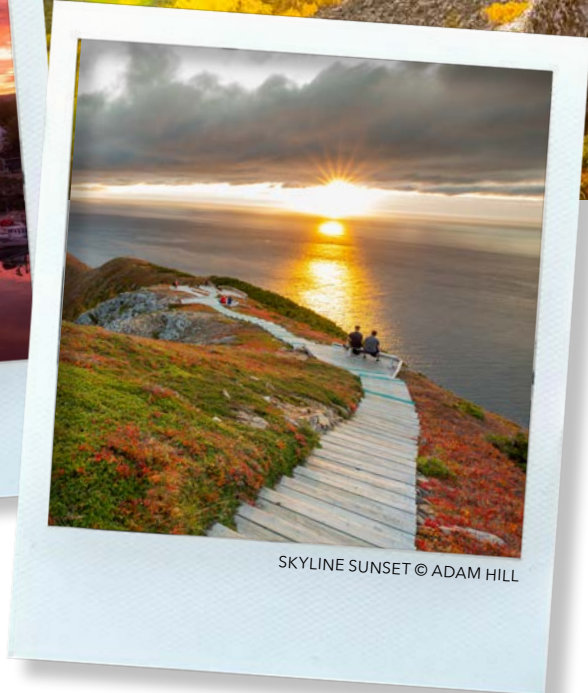
FALL ON FRANEY MOUNTAIN © ADAM HILL

TIPS

- Mobile phone coverage can be spotty on parts of the island, so download maps to access offline if you divert off the trail for hikes etc.
- Moose, coyotes, and black bears are all present in Cape Breton, and all can (on rare occasions) be dangerous so follow signage and use common sense with any animal encounters.
- Some businesses close earlier in autumn, so be sure to call ahead for campsite bookings.
- You'll need to purchase a pass to enter Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Visit: parks.canada.ca



SUNRISE IN CHÉTICAMP © ADAM HILL



SKYLINE SUNSET © ADAM HILL

JOURNEY
PLANNER

GETTING THERE: Fly into Halifax, Nova Scotia's biggest international airport; pick up your RV from the CanaDream pick-up point close to the airport in Halifax; and drive three hours and twenty minutes to reach Cape Breton Island, attached to mainland Nova Scotia by a causeway. 