Western PEI: Tyne Valley, Acadia, and the “Up West” Tour

Even in Canada’s smallest province, regional loyalties can be intense. When we lived on Prince Edward Island, our home was in Kings County, in the east, and we rarely had occasion to travel west of Summerside. It had been a matter of faith for us that our eastern end of the Island was the most beautiful, the least spoiled, the best for cycling. Then we biked all over western PEI for this book. What a revelation! Now we know that “Up West” is a splendid area for cycling – at least as beautiful, we must admit, as our beloved Kings County.

We begin cycling Up West because there are fewer tourists, lighter traffic, and less commercial development here than in any other region of PEI. Up West you can glimpse Island life as it was generations ago, long before the world came barreling across Confederation Bridge.

Cycling in Western PEI, you can stay on an island off the Island, where an Indian band offers economical lodging for guests. You can learn about the potato industry – more fascinating than you might expect – and about Irish Moss. You can visit fishing harbours, a shipbuilding museum and restored shipbuilder’s mansion, and the only working lighthouse in Canada that also serves as an inn. There are many agricultural fairs, festivals, fiddling and dancing contests Up West. Prince County is full of surprises. In the small town of Tignish, for example, there are weekly classical concerts on one of Canada’s largest and most famous antique pipe organs.

On the Up West Tour, you will be riding along the coast much of the time, stopping occasionally at photogenic little harbours or cooling off with a swim off pink sand beaches.
This chapter contains two shorter loops and one multi-day tour: The Tyne Valley Loop, the Acadian Loop, and the Up-West Tour. There are also directions for cycling from Summerside to Tyne Valley and to Wellington, where the Acadian Loop begins. These connections are shown in gray on the overview map.

If you come to PEI on Confederation Bridge and cycle from there, you can follow Day One of the Tour of Central PEI (p. 52) shown in orange on the overview map, as far as Summerside. Then connect from Summerside to the Tyne Valley or Acadian Loops (p.24 or 43).

Seacow Pond, a tiny harbour on Day Two of the Up West Tour
Western Prince Edward Island

Tyne Valley Loop
29 to 44 kilometres / 18 to 27 miles

This ride is a wonderful introduction to the quiet pleasures of western Prince County. It begins in Tyne Valley, a compact village of remarkable charm. There is a lively restaurant and pub, a small deli-café, a grocery store, fine old homes, a crafts shop selling hand-knit sweaters, and one of PEI's great summer events – the Tyne Valley Oyster Festival. The Doctor’s Inn offers food and lodging in the village, Hilltop Acres B&B is nearby, and there is camping at Green Park Provincial Park.

Tyne Valley Oyster Festival

In early August, Tyne Valley overflows with visitors for the Oyster Festival, one of PEI's most authentic, old-time summer events. There are horse pulls, a strong man contest, fiddling competitions, step dancing, and an oyster shucking race. This festival is very popular. Many tourists attend and are warmly welcomed, but it is still largely an Island affair, and that makes all the difference.

On this loop ride, you can stop at a parsonage where Lucy Maude Montgomery once lived and visit a museum that focuses on PEI's famous oyster industry. On Lennox Island, a Mi'kmaq Indian band operates eco-tourism businesses, a hostel, and a cultural centre.

Horse pulling competition, a popular event at the festival
Terrain

There are a few moderate hills near Tyne Valley. Otherwise, the terrain is nearly flat.

Directions

The ride starts in the centre of Tyne Valley village, at the intersection of Routes 12 and 169. McNeil's Food Store is on the corner. For breakfast there is a little café just down the block on Route 169. Across the street from the café is The Landing Oyster House and Pub, with cheerful atmosphere, good food, and some of the best entertainment on the Island – perfect for rewarding yourself after completing the ride.
Western Prince Edward Island

Bideford Parsonage Museum

The Bideford Parsonage Museum on the corner at 4.3 was constructed in 1878 for a local accountant, but it became the parsonage of the local Methodist Church. It was home for a year to Lucy Maude Montgomery. In 1894-95, when she was only 19 years old, the famous author took her first teaching job in the Bideford School. You can visit her sunny bedroom, see family photos, clothing, and other memorabilia, and gaze out her window, enjoying the same view that she did while composing poems and writing in her journal.

Side trip to the P.E.I. Shellfish Museum

Route 166 turns left at the Parsonage, but you can continue straight to the P.E.I. Shellfish Museum. There are informative displays about the Island’s oyster industry. Staff answered all our questions and shared their first-hand experiences in the arduous work of aquaculture.

From the Shellfish Museum, backtrack to the Bideford Parsonage Museum and turn right. This detour adds about 1.3 kilometres to distances that follow.

0.0  From Tyne Valley, ride uphill on Route 12 West. The side of McNeil’s Food Store should be on your left as you start out.

⇒ 0.4 Turn right onto Route 166 towards Bideford.

3.9  Hilltop Acres B&B is on the right.

⇐ 4.3 Turn left, staying on Route 166, but first consider two stops, the Bideford Parsonage Museum and the PEI Shellfish Museum.

5.0 West Island Art Gallery Co-op is on the left.

⇒ 5.5  Turn right back onto Route 12 West towards Poplar Grove. There is a small dam and a spillway here, a pretty spot. Two hundred metres after the turn, Kenny’s Luncheonette is on Ellerslie Road on the left.

⇒ 7.8 Turn right onto Route 163 toward East Bideford and Lennox Island; Route 12 continues straight.

⇐ 9.1 Turn left on Southwest Road, which is unpaved for just over a kilometre, after which paving begins. If you go straight here instead of turning left, you will reach Lennox Island. (See Lennox Island Detour, next page.

11.9 Pass Brooks Road on the right, and then Little Channel Road on the left. The last kilometre of Southwest Road is unpaved.

⇐ 13.6 Turn left at a Yield sign onto Route 173 towards Freeland; Milligan Wharf Road goes right.

⇐ 16.9 Bear left at a Yield sign; then turn left onto Route 12 South. At this intersection, pass the Freeland Presbyterian Church, a lovely old building, followed (oddly enough) by the United Church Cemetary. Stay on Route 12 all the way back to Tyne Valley, backtracking for a few kilometres along the way.

28.6  Arrive in the centre of the village. The Landing Oyster House and Pub is to the right. Enjoy yourself!

END OF RIDE
Lennox Island Detour

On this detour, starting at 9.1, you can visit the Mi'Kmaq Cultural Centre on Lennox Island, a community museum with exhibits on many aspects of native people's life. Next to the cultural centre, the Ecotourism Complex has affordable accommodation in a new hostel on the shore of Malpeque Bay. Minigoo Cafe serves traditional Mi'kmaq food, and there is a small crafts gallery. The nearby Lennox Island Adventure Centre offers outdoor activities including sea kayak tours.

To reach Lennox Island, continue straight at kilometre 9.1 instead of turning left. In 4.8 kilometres the flat road crosses a causeway and bridge to the island. Just after the bridge on the left is a convenience store with a basic restaurant. Continue to a T and turn right to the Mi'kmaq Cultural Centre and the Ecotourism Centre and Hostel. After your visit, backtrack to kilometre 9.1 and turn right, continuing on Southwest Road. This detour adds 13.4 kilometres to subsequent distances.

Green Park

Green Park, near Tyne Valley, is the home of the Historic Yeo House and Shipbuilding Museum.

In 1819 James Yeo arrived in the Tyne Valley area from England, flat broke. He earned some money, opened a liquor store, and eventually became a shipbuilder. Before Yeo died in 1863, he was the richest, most influential individual in Island history. During his lifetime he built over 350 wooden sailing ships and created an empire of shipyards, warehouses, and wharves on PEI and in England. Yeo's son James Jr. built the magnificent home which has been restored and opened to the public. Some of the Yeo family's 20,000 acres of land, including the house, is now in Green Park Provincial Park.

The Yeo family made their fortune in the Golden Age of Island shipbuilding, roughly 1850 to 1875, when the size of PEI's shipbuilding industry was second only to that of Great Britain. In Green Park, besides visiting the Yeo House, you can tour a museum that focuses on the history of shipbuilding on the Island.

Reach Green Park from Tyne Valley by riding east on Route 12. In 4 kilometres, turn left onto Green Park Road and reach the park entrance in 2 more kilometres. There is a campground with tent sites and cabins.