



# Prince Edward Island

## List of Rides

Ride Name	Distance (kilometres)	Highlights / Description	Page
<b>Western PEI</b>			
Tyne Valley Loop	29-44	Quiet roads from charming village; mostly easy cycling	22
Up-West Tour Day One	62-78	Scenic stretches along the water, town of Alberton, Northport Harbour; mostly easy cycling	29
Up-West Tour Day Two	42	Fishing ports, good beach, north Cape Wind Farm; easy cycling	32
Up-West Tour Day Three	58	Spectacular coastal ride, fishing ports, Irish Moss Interpretive Centre, good beaches, West Point Lighthouse Inn; a few rolling hills near end	35
Up-West Tour Day Four	65	Cross Island through potato country, PEI Potato Museum in O'Leary, short stretch on Confederation Trail; easy cycling	39
Acadian Loop	41	French heritage, churches, Bottle Houses, lighthouse; easy cycling	41
Summerside Connection	20-39	Link from Summerside to rides in west, some hills around Grand River	45
<b>Central PEI</b>			
Tour of Central PEI Day One	48-64	Confederation Bridge to Summerside, beautiful, rolling countryside, exceptional park near Malpeque; moderate cycling	49-50
Malpeque Loop	64	"Anne" museums, Cape Tryon, fine beach near French River, town of Kensington; a few challenging hills, medium difficulty overall	55
Tour of Central PEI Day Two	78-83	Quintessential PEI scenery, Cavendish, National Park Beaches, Rustico Harbour; long ride with challenging hills in first half	59
Tour of Central PEI Day Three	41-51	National Park, Confederation Trail, Charlottetown; easy cycling	65
Eastward Ho!	14	Connection that links Central PEI rides to those in the east	68
Charlottetown – Mt Stewart Loop	68	Confederation Trail, Mt. Stewart and the Trailside Café, a few scenic hills around Pisquid but moderate to easy overall	69
Tour of Central PEI Day Four	68-77	Beautiful ride along south shore, Victoria-by-the-Sea; gently rolling terrain predominates, moderate to easy	75
Strathgartney Detour	34	Provincial Park Campground, beautiful, hilly terrain; challenging ride	81
Fort Amherst Loop	34	National Historic Site, rolling hills by the sea; moderate difficulty	82
<b>Eastern PEI</b>			
St. Peters Loop & Greenwich Day Trip	54 + 20	Great beaches, National Park, Confederation Trail; easy cycling	87
East Point Loop	72	Heritage Road, great beaches, lighthouse, Elmira Station, Confederation Trail, Basin Head; easy to moderate cycling	92
Fortune Loop	57-68	Rivers, bays and harbours, a great beach; easy to moderate cycling	96
Panmure Island Loop	68	One of PEI's most beautiful beaches, Murray River, Buffoland, Montague Harbour Complex; long, but easy cycling	100
Cape Bear – Guernsey Cove Loop	57	Confederation Trail, Murray River, Cape Bear Lighthouse, unspoiled farmland by the sea, hidden beach; moderate to easy cycling	105
Loop One from Lord Selkirk Park	47	St. John's Church, International Spinners, Point Prim Lighthouse; a few challenging hills but moderate overall	109
Loop Two from Lord Selkirk Park	28	Orwell Corners Historic Village, Sir Andrew MacPhail Homestead; moderate cycling	113
Orwell to Charlottetown	40	Connection to Charlottetown uses scenic rural roads rather than highway; easy to moderate cycling	116





# Prince Edward Island



*Fields like a patchwork quilt spread over the gently rolling countryside*

## Welcome to Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island is the most popular cycling destination in the Maritimes – perhaps in all of Canada. It lies in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, separated from mainland New Brunswick and Nova Scotia by Northumberland Strait. The length of the Island, from North Cape to East Point, is 288 kilometres (180 miles.) Although PEI is Canada’s most densely-populated province, many people still live on farms and in small villages scattered across gently rolling countryside. With an intricate network of quiet roads and miles of beaches, PEI is ideal for vacationing on two wheels.

In summer on PEI, green fields criss-crossed by red clay lanes and outlined by spruce hedgerows look like a patchwork quilt. As autumn approaches and fields turn shades of gold, they contrast even more sharply with the pink sand of Island beaches and the blue of sea and sky. It takes poetry, not a cycling guide, to capture the special quality of PEI’s light and landscape, but ride here for a while and you will know why many people have called it the most beautiful place on earth.



*EmmyLou Harris’s “Red Dirt Girls”*

Prince Edward Island was inhabited for centuries by the Mi’kmaq People. The French were the first Europeans to arrive, in the late 1500s. In the 18th and 19th centuries, settlers from Scotland, Ireland, and England arrived. Their descendants are the majority of today’s residents, but a thriving Acadian community still celebrates its heritage, especially in parts of Prince County, and a well-organized Mi’kmaq band lives on Lennox Island. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people from Holland and Lebanon made new homes on the Island. Whatever their heritage, long-established PEI residents call themselves “Islanders.” Their home is “the Island” with a capital “I.” The rest of the world is referred to, vaguely, as “Away.” You, a cycling tourist, are definitely “from Away, but don’t worry – local pride does not prevent Islanders from welcoming you with warmth and hospitality.



# Prince Edward Island

## A Bridge to the Mainland

We lived on PEI in the 1970s and 1980s. At that time, Canada's smallest province was *really* an Island. The only way to reach the mainland, other than by plane, was to cross Northumberland Strait by ferry, between Wood Islands, PEI, and Nova Scotia, or between Borden, PEI, and New Brunswick. The Borden ferry ran year 'round, bravely smashing through the ice in winter and spring, getting stuck only occasionally.

For generations, some Islanders dreamed about a bridge. The idea was supported especially by potato shippers and tourism operators, hoping for lower freight costs and more visitors. Others feared that a bridge might destroy "The Island Way of Life."

Now Confederation Bridge is a reality, though some Islanders insist on calling it a "fixed link." It took 5000 workers almost four years to finish the 13-kilometer span, which was built on 65 giant pillars and \$1 billion in public and private funds. It is the longest bridge in the Western Hemisphere. We crossed the bridge for the first time in 1998, soon after it opened. We were returning to see old friends and cycle on the Island. Then we returned again, several years later, to work on this book. We wondered, has "The Island Way of Life" survived?



*Confederation Bridge from New Brunswick to Prince Edward Island*



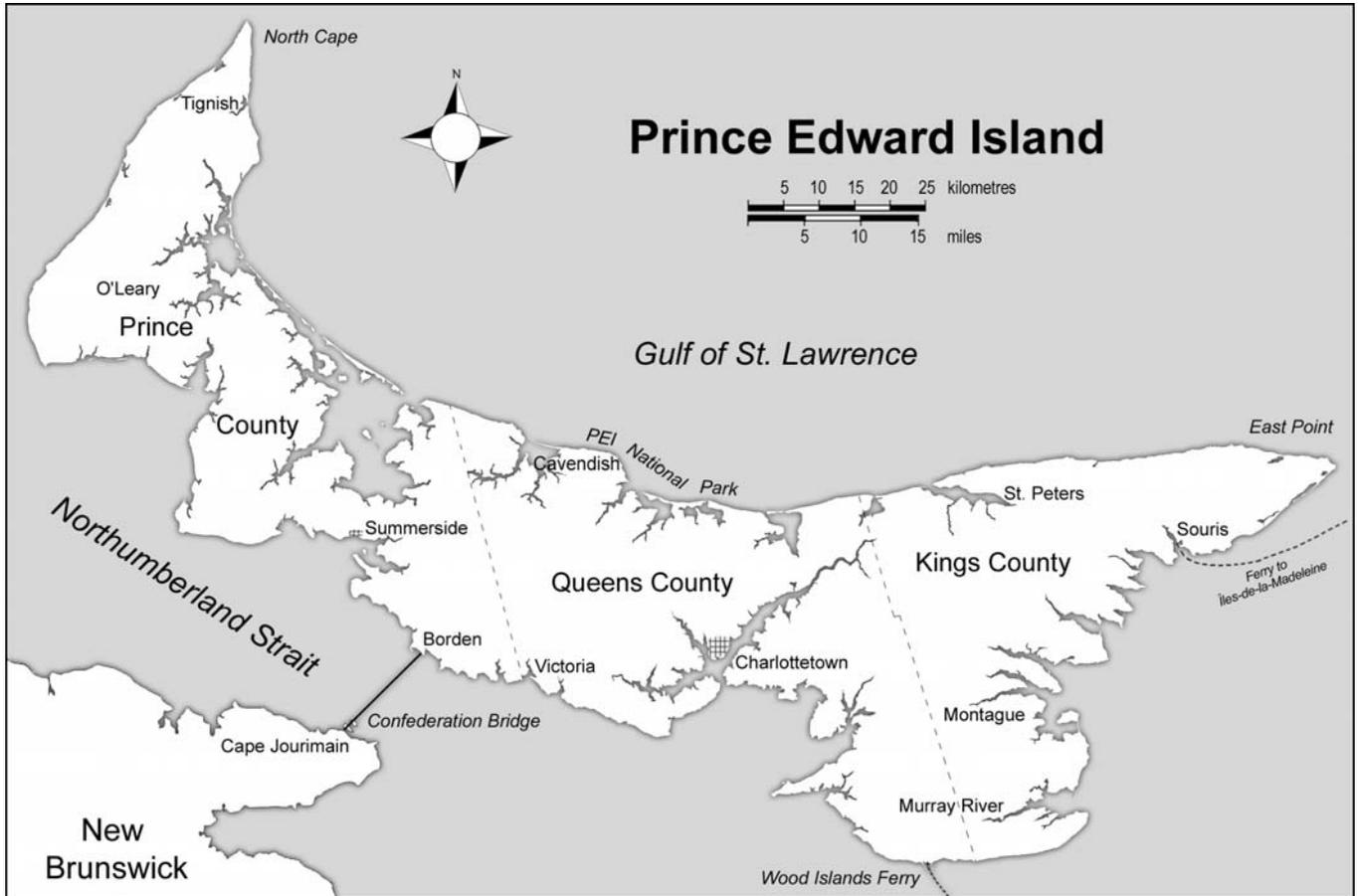
*Ready for lobster season in North Lake Harbour*

Well, there have certainly been changes, not all for the better. Around Charlottetown, the capital, growth has been phenomenal. Shopping malls have sprouted where potatoes grew. Many small stores in rural areas have closed. In the village where we once lived, there were two small groceries, and now there are none. Everyone drives to the big, new superstores. Of course we don't know to what degree the bridge is responsible. Such changes may have come anyway.

The good news is that PEI's beauty is unspoiled, and it is still an ideal place for cycling. Roads in most parts of the Island are still lightly traveled, fields of grain and potatoes still slope to the sea, tidy farms still prosper, and beaches are still washed by the warmest water north of the Carolinas — for a few weeks each year, anyway.



# Prince Edward Island



## Cycling the Three Counties

Prince Edward Island has three counties – Prince in the west, Queens in the centre, and Kings in the east. The regions into which our routes are divided – “Up West” as Islanders sometimes say, Central, and Eastern – correspond approximately with the counties. The biggest towns are Charlottetown, the capital, in Queens County, and Summerside, in Prince.

A million tourists come to PEI each year – seven times the province’s population – and the vast majority arrive in mid summer. Queens County in Central PEI is the region to which they gravitate. They are drawn by the beaches of PEI National Park; by Cavendish, immortalized in the “Anne of Green Gables” books by Lucy Maude Montgomery, the Island’s most famous author; and by Charlottetown, the provincial capital, where the Fathers of Confederation met in 1864 to plan the new nation of Canada. As a result, roads in Queens County, especially around Charlottetown and Cavendish, are the busiest in the province. In May or June, before peak season, or in late August and September, when the crowds have thinned, you can enjoy cycling anywhere on the Island, but in mid summer we recommend heading for Prince or Kings Counties, in the west or east.

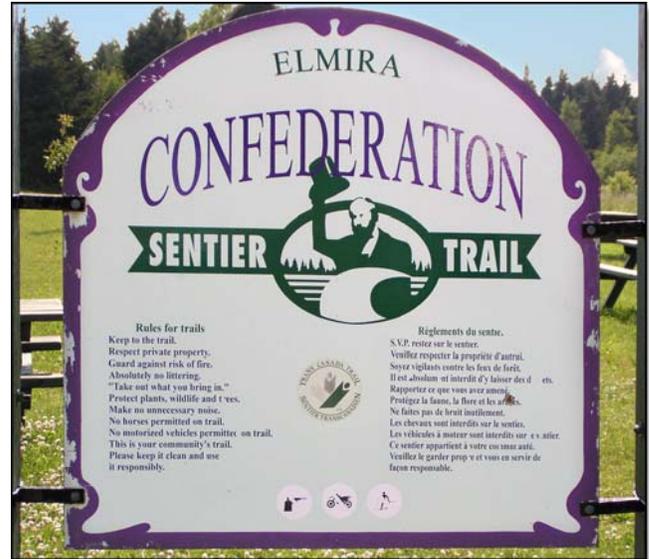




## Prince Edward Island

If you come in peak season from New Brunswick on Confederation Bridge, consider starting with **Section One** of the **Tour of Central PEI** (p. 36) as far as Summerside. Then follow the **Summerside Connection** (p. 31) to the **Tyne Valley Loop** and the **Up West Tour** (p. 8) or to the **Acadian Loop** (p. 27). If you cross to the Island on the Wood Islands Ferry from Nova Scotia, you can start immediately on one of the quietest, most idyllic rides in Eastern PEI, the **Cape Bear, Guernsey Cove Loop** (p. 91).

Confederation Bridge offers a pleasant surprise just for cyclists. Motorists pay about \$40 to leave the Island on the bridge, but cyclists and their bikes are carried on a shuttle van for free. Is there another example, anywhere, of cyclists being treated so much better than motorists? (There is a similar charge for Wood Islands Ferry – again, collected only upon leaving the Island.)



Sign marking the eastern end of Confederation Trail

### Confederation Trail

Abandoned rail beds on PEI have been converted to Confederation Trail, a multi-use trail that runs 279 kilometres from Tignish in the west to Elmira in the east, plus a few spurs. It is heavily promoted and immensely popular. Many visitors cycle the length of the Island on the trail and receive an award certificate for doing so.

We love some scenic parts of Confederation Trail, and it is great for getting safely in and out Charlottetown or Summerside. A few hours of cycling anywhere on the trail can be enjoyable. Also, the trail is a blessing for cycling families who need not worry about their children swerving into traffic.

However, we have reservations about Confederation Trail. Once upon a time, the life of the province revolved around its railways, but that has not been true for generations. Stick to the trail and you miss many of the little villages and shops, museums and galleries, B&B's, inns, homes and farms that are now strung along the Island's quiet roads – not along its abandoned rail beds. Most of Confederation Trail is inland, missing too many beaches and picturesque harbours. Some stretches are flat, straight, and monotonous. Finally, the condition of the gravel surface varies from place to place, time to time. Occasionally the gravel is too deep for enjoyable riding on road bikes.

Our recommendation, therefore, is to use the trail by all means, but not to ride on it exclusively. Use routes like those that follow to explore more of the Island than you will ever see by sticking to Confederation Trail.

