

DRIVING TOURS

CHESTER MUNICIPALITY, NOVA SCOTIA



VISTAS & WHARVES

THE ASPOTOGAN PENINSULA,
EAST CHESTER, BLANDFORD,
HUBBARD'S COVE

FOREST, FARMS, LAKES & RIVERS

NEW ROSS, WINDSOR ROAD

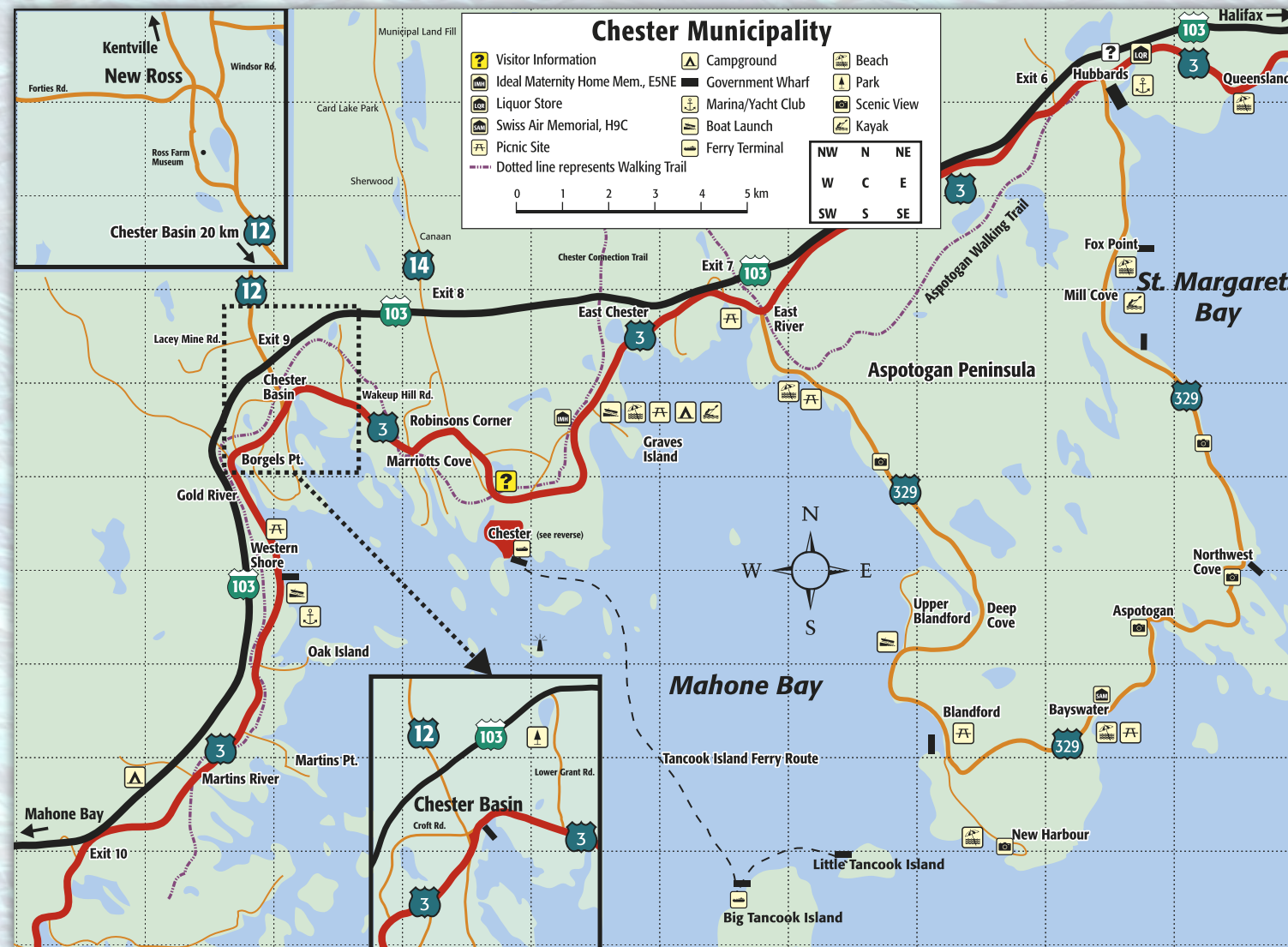
ISLANDS & BAYS

CHESTER BASIN, GOLD RIVER,
WESTERN SHORE, MARTIN'S RIVER

www.chesterns.com



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Photos by: Jim Barkhouse & Len Wagg, Municipality of Chester



ALL TOURS START AND FINISH AT THE OLD CHESTER RAILWAY STATION, HOWEVER THE OPPORTUNITY EXISTS TO START AND END TOURS AT ANY POINT.

Chester Municipality enjoys a well-deserved reputation as one of Canada's most picturesque communities. For over one hundred years visitors have come to the area and discovered a desirable environment to live, work and play.

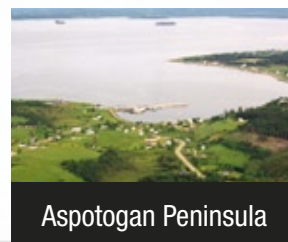
Conveniently located an easy 50 minutes west of Halifax. Here, rolling woodlands, lakes and rivers give way to one of the most beautiful island studded coastlines to be found anywhere.

THE ASPOTOGAN PENINSULA

DISTANCE 75–85 KILOMETRES

Upon leaving the old Chester Railway Station, turn left and proceed east along the Lighthouse Route, Highway #3, keeping the ocean on the right.

During the short drive to Route #329, Graves Island Provincial Park is an ideal place to walk, picnic, launch a boat or camp overnight in your tent, trailer or RV. A short distance further along Highway #3 a picnic park nestled on the ocean presents itself.

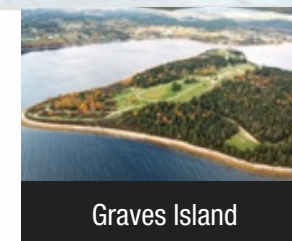


Aspotogan Peninsula

Take the next road on the right, after the picnic park. The Lighthouse Route follows Route #329 around the Aspotogan Peninsula. The large plant on the left manufactures high quality hardboard siding and panelling. Almost immediately on the left an abandoned railway line appears. This 11 kilometre trail takes the hiker across the top of the Aspotogan Peninsula to the village of Hubbard's Cove.

The waters of the Mahone Bay and Meisner's Beach appear on the right as the drive follows the shoreline. St. George's Anglican Church, built in 1889 appears on the left. The bell was cast in Boston and installed in the belfry in 1891. For the next 10 kilometres the road winds through areas of forest punctuated with wonderful views of the Mahone Bay, until Deep Cove is reached. It is worthwhile to turn onto the unpaved road, the original road to Blandford and take a few minutes to view Deep Cove. The entrance to the cove is deep and narrow and almost invisible from the sea. It was a perfect hiding place for pirates, privateers and rum-runners and is still a great sheltered anchorage.

Continuing along the dirt road to Upper Blandford, a lovely ocean view of the Mahone Bay appears. Turn left at the bottom of the hill to Blandford, first settled in the 1750's. The houses are spread along the shore never more than a few hundred metres from the ocean.



Graves Island



Blandford Area

The islands closest are Big and Little Tancook, the only two islands in the Mahone Bay inhabited year-round. A pedestrian ferry from the village of Chester provides a daily connection to the mainland. On your left, St. Barnabas church, built in 1867 (the year Canada became a nation) has stained glass donated by local families. Beyond the church lie the crossroads, as it is known locally. On the right is the harbour. The wharf offers an opportunity to view some of the fishing boats that operate out of Blandford. A short drive straight ahead is New Harbour. It provides a mainland harbour for the residents of East Ironbound Island. The island and its lighthouse can be seen to the right. At New Harbour the buildings across the harbour entrance are all that remain of the Blandford Whaling Station, Nova Scotia's only whaling station. It ceased operating in 1972. At the Blandford Look-Off two interpretive panels tell the story of Blandford and the Karl Karlsen Whaling Station.

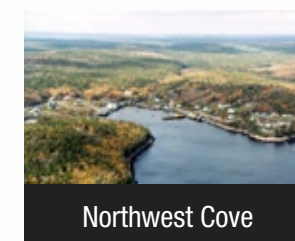


Bayswater Park

From the crossroads, follow the Lighthouse Route to Bayswater. All Saint's Church, built in 1865 and the waters of St. Margaret's Bay come into view. A short distance past the church on the left is the entrance to the memorial and interment site of the September 2, 1998 tragedy of Swiss Air Flight 111. The beach at Bayswater is perhaps one of the best on the south shore offering the visitor full facilities including a very well kept provincial picnic park across the road.

The route then follows the shoreline inland before it descends into the small fishing community of Aspotogan, from which the peninsula takes its name. The cove is a favourite subject for artists and photographers. To the south of the community lies the Aspotogan Mountain, the highest point on the peninsula.

A few kilometres further on is Northwest Cove. St. Cuthbert's church welcomes you to this picturesque fishing community. There is a memorial in front of the church to a Canadian Air Force pilot whose fighter aircraft crashed in this area in 1943. Northwest Cove is home to fishers of Irish and Hunguenot descent. Boats, splendidly painted, rest at their moorings in the calm cove waters. The horseshoe shaped village looks across to Peggy's Cove. The entrance to this quiet harbour is guarded by Horse Island which is home to a multitude of sea birds.



Northwest Cove

Passing through The Lodge, the waters of St. Margaret's Bay appear on the right. Wonderful ocean vistas continue through Birchy Head to Mill Cove. Keep an eye open for Mill Cove Shore Road, a gravel road on the right. Take this scenic route by the ocean past all the fish stores and wharves where people fish for mackerel and pollock.

Continue past Fox Point Beach and the century old St. James Church to Fox Point Harbour where the traditional green tuna skiffs associated with the Aspotogan Peninsula can be seen.

The protected Harbour of Hubbard's Cove appears on the right dominated by the old fish plant. Following the shore to the right leads to Hubbard's Cove settled in the 1820's. History enthusiasts will appreciate the appealing heritage architecture of the village.

To return to the village of Chester follow Highway #3 west through Simms Settlement, East River and East Chester. As you pass the entrance to highway #329, on your right you can see the beginning of the Chester Connection Trail. This is where the Aspotogan Trail joins the Chester Connection Trail turning the railway line into a recreation trail running through the Municipal of Chester for a distance of 47 km. (Hubbards to Martin's River). At the East Chester Recreation Centre a stone monument has been erected to remember the "Butter-Box Babies" who were placed for adoption with the Ideal Maternity Home.

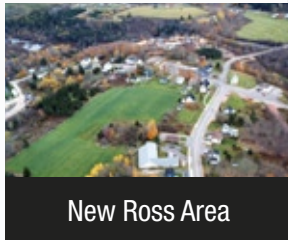


"Butter - Box Babies" Monument

FORESTS, FARMS, LAKES & RIVERS

DISTANCE 90–120 KILOMETRES

The rural backcountry is a Nova Scotia experience not to be missed. Routes #14 and #12 with the connecting paved loop from New Ross to Smith's Corner provide a drive through the centre of the Chester Municipality's forest, farm and cottage country.

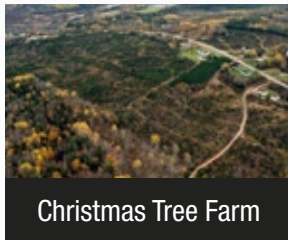


New Ross Area

Here it is possible to catch glimpses of wildlife, deer, foxes and bears as well as eagles, osprey and a variety of songbirds.

When leaving the old Chester Railway Station turn right, set your odometer to zero and travel along the Lighthouse Route on Highway #3 to Chester Basin. Immediately after passing through the centre of Chester Basin turn right at the junction of Highway #3 and Route #12.

From Chester Basin the road climbs northward toward New Ross where the ocean falls behind and the forest appears. In places the mixed forest of maple, birch and spruce gives way to stands of neatly sheared fir trees. These Christmas-trees-in-training are the main forest products of this region. Each year thousands of trees, wreaths and fir garlands are shipped abroad. This county is the balsam fir Christmas tree capital of the world. The community invites visitors to share in their celebration of this industry and their rural way of life, by hosting an annual Christmas Festival each year on the first full weekend of December. Here, happy holiday wishes really do grow on trees.

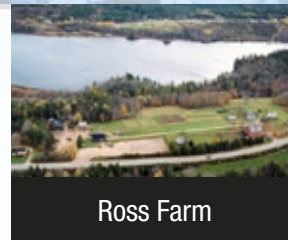


Christmas Tree Farm

At 21 kilometres after beginning the tour, watch for a big white coach house on the left (#3011) in Sefferville. Now a private home, it was once a stopover when travel from Chester Basin to New Ross took two days by ox and wagon.

From the hilltops and looking toward the horizon, all hills are about the same height. Glaciers, ten thousand years ago swept over this region, leaving level horizons and rolling hills called drumlins. The drumlins make ideal fields and farms. Soon New Ross comes into view, nestled in a broad valley along the winding Gold River. This river empties into the Atlantic between Chester Basin and Western Shore. Here, in New Ross, it served as waterpower for various mills and as a way to transport timber to the coast for building ships. Today, it is still a fine river for salmon fishing.

At 28 kilometres after crossing over the Rose Bank Bridge, you can experience true rural history at the Ross Farm Museum of Living Agriculture, a visit that will take the traveller back in time to the mid 1800's.



Ross Farm

Costumed heritage interpreters bring life to this 19th century settlement. The 60-acre museum includes an 1830's vintage store, the Ross farmhouse (circa 1817), barns and a workshop, as well as a village school, a blacksmith shop, and cooperage. Ride a horse-drawn wagon and see demonstrations of spinning, flax processing and woodworking. Enjoy the walking trails. If there is a family connection in this area; genealogy records are available. The farm is home to rare breeds of animals such as the Canadian Horse, Southdown Sheep and silver gray Dorking Poultry.

Just after the Ross Farm is the New Ross Community Park, which encompasses the New Ross Christmas Tree Interpretive Centre, the New Ross Lions Picnic Park and a walking trail. This trail from the park has been constructed allowing visitors of all mobilities to enjoy the winding nature trail down to a meadow lookout over Lake Lawson. From here, more able bodies can continue on to the hiking trail on Ross Farm property that provides a beautiful lake side walk, which if you follow the loop back takes approximately 40 minutes. If visitors choose to continue on to view the exhibits of the Ross Farm, they are asked to pay admission at the gift shop.

The village proper is called Charing Cross in memory of the English origins of the first settlers. Locally it is called "The Cross." At The Cross, on the right stands the Roman Catholic Church built in 1877. This is the site of the original chapel. This "finely proportioned wooden interpretation of gothic principals" is the longest continuing Roman Catholic place of worship in Lunenburg County.

Across the intersection to the left is the Anglican Church and rectory. This church was built in 1876–1879 to replace the original destroyed by fire. Christ Church rectory was built in 1864 and both buildings are registered provincially as historic sites.

Cemeteries in this area contain many old and interesting headstones marking the last resting place of those who established this community.

At The Cross there is a choice; to the left a 20 kilometre loop to the community known as the Forties or right to the Windsor Road and a return to Chester.

Turning left, toward the Forties, a quarter of a kilometre down the road stands the Baptist Church built in 1905 and the War Memorial on the right. Originally erected at The Cross, it commemorates the soldiers from the New Ross area who fell in World War 1. Eighty men volunteered for service from the area and this cenotaph is believed to be the first in Nova Scotia erected to the fallen World War 1 veterans. Climbing Porcupine Hill many farms dot the landscape. The Forties settlement is little changed from a century ago. The community centre offers a variety of events and suppers year round. Visit Hildaniel Brown House Museum and view artifacts from the early days of the settlement.

After returning to The Cross and turning left the Lincoln-Meister House (#4865), dating back to 1866 appears on your left. A little further on, also on the left is an archaeological run of stone walls, the subject of fascinating interpretations including several built for an English king about 1600 or they may have connections with Henry Sinclair, the Knight's Templar and the Holy Grail.

Returning to The Cross again, turn left and head toward Route #14, the Windsor Road. Keep left at the "Y". Settlers clearing their fields piled boulders along the property lines. There are many such examples as you travel this section.

Keep to the right at the next "Y". Enjoy the pristine lakes and rivers, small community churches, old homesteads and the natural beauty of this country road. This is cottage country where cottagers outnumber residents and many come to fish and hunt. From the soft pastels of spring through the natural bounty of summer, the blaze of autumn foliage and the beauty of winter it is a road for all seasons. Watch for wildlife, from graceful whitetail deer to shy rabbits, majestic eagles to brilliant blue jays and dainty wild flowers amid the fields and forests.

At Smiths Corner, Vaughan and the Windsor Road, on the left Falls Lake Park offers a perfect site for a picnic. A right turn at Route #14 will lead the traveller back to the Village of Chester and the ocean.

On the return journey, Card Lake Park offers a site to launch a canoe, take a swim or enjoy a picnic. A half-kilometre further, on your right, is Sherwood Road. A short distance down this road past the Sherwood Baptist Church can be found a farm that raises miniature horses, well worth a visit.

Returning to the Windsor Road, heading south, enjoy the views from the crest of each hill. The water sparkling in the distance is the Mahone Bay from headland to headland. Lunenburg to the right, Blandford to the left, and the Tancook Islands set between.

The Windsor Road crosses over Highway #103 and ends at Robinson's Corner, a left turn returns the visitor to the Village of Chester.

ISLANDS & BAYS

DISTANCE 35–40 KILOMETRES

The drive westward along the coast passes through a number of small communities such as Chester Basin, Gold River, Western Shore and Martin's River. All of these offer the opportunity for short "side trips" to explore and discover the quaint rural atmosphere that is quintessential Nova Scotia.



Western Shore Area

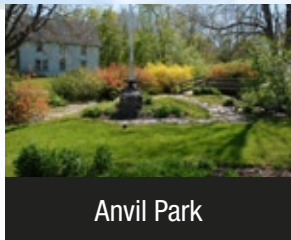
Leaving the old Chester Railway Station turn right and travel out of the village for about two kilometres. At the junction of Highway #3 and Route #14, keep right onto Route #14 and take the first road on the left, Wake Up Hill Road. A magnificent view of the Mahone Bay awaits the visitor with the Aspotogan Peninsula on the left, the Tancook Islands on the horizon and the headlands of Lunenburg on the right.

Returning to the highway and turning right takes the visitor through the community of Marriott's Cove. After crossing over Middle River, the second road on the right, Lower Grant Road, leads to the Chester Basin Recreation Park. This little side trip offers the swimmer a beach, changing rooms and a picnic area.

Less than one kilometre along the Lighthouse Route from Lower Grant Road toward Chester Basin, is the Backman House (#5219) on the left, a private residence that was built in 1770 by Nicholas Backman. This very large, pitched-roof Cape Cod often housed two Backman families at one time.

Chester Basin always offers photo opportunities, so get the camera ready!

"The Basin" was once a centre for shipbuilding and barrel making. A tiny gem in the middle of the community is Anvil Park, the site of Del Webber's Blacksmith Shop and the anvil on display is the one used by Del Webber when he took over the shop in 1896.



Anvil Park

The next road on the left is Borgels Point Road, a beautiful drive that follows the edge of the Basin. Watch for shore birds: ducks, cormorants, loons, geese and herons that nest, feed and shelter along the shore. Old Cape Cod and Victorian style houses nestle together along this winding country road.

At Highway #3 turn left and cross Gold River. To your right is a road called Beech Hill Road, which leads to the Gold River Reserves, one of the five reserves owned, by the Acadian First Nation. Gold River is well known for its salmon. Gold was mined in this area about 70 years ago. The river acted as a highway to the interior of the province. The high bridge upriver was constructed in 1903 and once carried trains fifty feet above the water.

Western Shore is so named because it was the west side of the original land grant of 1750. Again the ocean and some of the many islands of the Mahone Bay appear on the left. It was among these islands that the Yankee privateer the Young Teazer sought sanctuary. Cornered when the wind died and encircled by British warships, one member of the Teazer's crew, not wanting to be captured by the British blew up his ship, killing himself and over half his shipmates while injuring many more. Many people along the coast, in the two centuries since that tragic evening, claim to have seen a rigged ship ablaze upon the bay that disappears in a silent explosion. Watch for the ghost ship, the Young Teazer as she continues her journey among the 365 islands of the Mahone Bay.

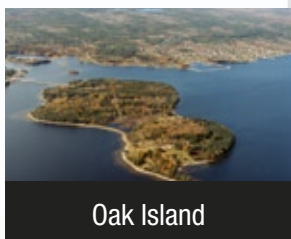
Wild Rose Park is a good place to pull over, relax for a moment and experience the sea; listen to the sea gulls, smell the sea breeze and taste the salt.



Wild Rose Park

These are the waters off Martin's Point that were supposed to have been frequented by Captain Kidd, the infamous pirate who buried booty on Oak Island. Treasure hunters have searched for gold on this island for more than 200 years.

Millions have been spent yet the mystery only deepens. Legend holds that seven must die in the search before the treasure will reveal itself. To date six lives have been lost, and the search continues. The island is privately owned but can be viewed from Oak Island Inn and Marina.



Oak Island

The tour continues along the Lighthouse Route to Martin's River, the most westerly point of the Chester Municipality. As the river is crossed on the right is the old Railway Bridge dating back to 1904 when the line was built from Chester to Mahone Bay connecting the already completed section from Lunenburg to Mahone Bay. A short distance further on stands St. Martin's Church whose cornerstone was laid on August 19, 1886.

Seven kilometres from St. Martin's Church lay the village of Mahone Bay, which is well worth a visit. The return to the Village of Chester can be achieved either by travelling to exit #8 on Highway #103 or by retracing the tour along the Lighthouse Route to the Railway Station.