

Pukaskwa National Park top choice for superior scenery

TALES FROM THE ROAD



ARLENE & ROBIN KARPAN

The north shore of Lake Superior ranks among Canada's great road trips. The 700-kilometre stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway between Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie passes through splendid Canadian Shield landscapes lining the world's largest fresh-water lake.

As scenic gem about halfway along this route is Pukaskwa National Park, preserving 135 kilometres of rugged coastline with a combination of ancient granite bedrock, mixed forest, golden sand beaches and stunning views. What appeals to us most about the park is that it offers outstanding wilderness while being easy to access — just a 15-kilometre drive off the Trans-Canada Highway.

To impress the locals when you arrive, learn how to say Pukaskwa correctly, something that first-time visitors seldom get right. Despite what its spelling might suggest, it's pronounced "Puk-a-saw". The exact origin and meaning of the word have been lost in time. Thought to have Ojibway origins, one interpretation is that it referred to cooking animal bone marrow.

After arriving at the Hattie Cove campground and day-use area at the end of the road, you may as well put your car keys away for the rest of the stay — the only way to get around is either by walking or pad-



Pukaskwa National Park in Ontario preserves 135 kilometres of rugged coastline on Lake Superior with a combination of ancient granite bedrock, mixed forest, golden sand beaches and stunning views. | ROBIN AND ARLENE KARPAN PHOTOS

dling. The park is famous for the Coastal Paddling Route, providing great opportunities for canoeing or kayaking, while the 60-km Coastal Hiking Trail ranks among Canada's premier backpacking routes.

The good news is that you don't

have to tackle multi-day wilderness expeditions to enjoy the park. A wealth of amazing landscapes are a short walk from Hattie Cove. It almost seemed like we were walking through a Group of Seven painting. Places like this along the Lake Superior shore inspired the famous artists to create some of their most enduring images.

Our favourite short hike is the 2.2-km Southern Headland Trail. Starting next to the visitor centre, it climbs the rocky hills where Parks Canada's iconic red chairs overlook Hattie Cove. It then winds along the top of the headlands where we can appreciate the vastness of Lake Superior, eventually ending at an

attractive sandy beach in Horseshoe Bay near the campground.

Interpretive panels provide the lowdown on everything from geology to history and wildlife. One display describes Lake Superior as the world's largest air conditioner, since the immense volume of water acts like a refrigerator on a warm summer day. We feel that effect often as we experience short-sleeve shirt weather along forest paths away from the lake and then have to don sweaters as soon as we reach the shoreline.

Other short trails take us over rocky ravines to cliff tops with gorgeous views, and along a series of beaches scattered with driftwood.

Since most trails are interconnected, there's the option of doing one at a time or linking a few together for a half-day excursion.

The top day hike, however, is to the White River Suspension Bridge and Chigamiwiniwum Falls, along the first part of the Coastal Hiking Trail. The 18-km return route weaves through forest and beside the lakeshore.

The silence of our forest walk is interrupted by the crashing sound of water plunging down the narrow chasm. We emerge from the trees, step onto the edge of the bridge, and cautiously

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The White River roars and cascades down a deep gorge as it races toward Lake Superior.



The visitor centre reminds guests that the park is famous for the Coastal Paddling Route, providing great opportunities for canoeing or kayaking.

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glance down 23 metres to frothing Chigamiwinigum Falls. It's disconcerting looking through the open steel mesh floor of the 30-metre-long bridge as we slowly work our way across and peer straight down into the churning water far below. As far as we can see in both directions, the White River roars and cascades down the deep gorge as it

paces towards Lake Superior. Hattie Cove Campground is the only place to stay in the park. An excellent option for those without camping gear is to stay in an oTENTik, a cross between a frame tent and a small cabin. The nearby town of Marathon also has a variety of accommodations.

Arlene and Robin Karpan are well-travelled writers based in Saskatoon. Contact: travel@producer.com.



The White River Suspension Bridge and Chigamiwinigum Falls comprise the top day hike in the park.

Variety of conditions can cause burning or tingling feet

HEALTH CLINIC



CLARE ROWSON, MD

Q: I am a 65-year-old woman who has recently had a problem with a burning feeling or a tingling in the soles of my feet. Is this related to high blood pressure or diabetes? I have both.

I am not overweight or a smoker, although I used to smoke about a pack a day.

A: A burning sensation is just one form of mild pain, but it can feel unpleasant.

The three main types of pain are somatic, visceral and neuropathic.

- Somatic pain is usually described as dull or aching and is mostly located in the sensory receptors of the skin or muscles.
- Visceral pain is more acute and involves problems with the internal organs. It often feels like pressure or as though something is being squeezed.
- The third type, which is what I believe you have, is neuropathic pain. It is described as burning, shooting, stinging or being like pins and needles.

Diabetes can cause damage to the nerves of the feet and hands, which is known as diabetic peripheral neuropathy. This occurs in as many as 70 percent of diabetics.

Better control of blood sugar levels could give you relief. There are also some special socks you can buy that are designed to help. Other treatments include pain medica-

tions, antidepressants, anti-inflammatories and the use of TENS machines.

Do you drink too much? Alcohol may also cause a type of peripheral neuropathy. Is the burning worse at night? This is a common sign of any form of neuropathy.

Some neurological conditions and vitamin deficiencies can also cause peripheral neuropathy.

Low blood levels of vitamin B12 are common as people age because they may lack the correct amount of stomach acid needed to absorb this vitamin from meat.

If you take antacids, they can add to the problem by neutralizing the acid or cutting down on the body's production.

High blood pressure or poor circulation is more common at your age due to hardening of the arteries or arteriosclerosis.

Your past history of smoking may have added to the problem, but it is great that you have stopped.

Certain types of blood pressure medications can have the side effect of burning legs and feet, particularly if you have been taking them for five years or longer, so a change of medication or dosage may be all that is required.

However, please do not change or discontinue any medications without first checking with your family doctor.

Your doctor should also exclude a pinched nerve in the back from arthritis or other spinal problems.

Finally, there are also foot conditions that cause pain not related to nerves or circulation. Examples of these diseases are athletes' foot, a fungal infection, or gout, which is a painful type of arthritis. Either of these problems can be treated with oral or topical medications.

Clare Rowson is a retired medical doctor in Belleville, Ont. Contact: health@producer.com.

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