

## Island Walk, East

**PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND** Some call it 'Canada's Camino' and one 11-kilometre stretch is particularly picturesque **BY SABRINA PIRILLO**

Just a few more steps, I tell myself on my final day of the Island Walk – a 700-kilometre trail circumnavigating Prince Edward Island. I was only hiking a fraction of it: close to 50 km over three days. An overwhelming sense of joy and contentment washes over me as I spot the sign for St. Peter's Bay in the distance. I was on the last 14 clicks.

The trail is broken up into 32 sections, passing through ocean coastlines along parts of the Confederation Trail and red dirt roads, beaches and quiet secondary streets.

I'd asked a tour company to help show me the highlights of six of those sections. My favourite was section 20, which starts in Mount Stewart and finishes in St. Peter's Bay. This 27-km section can take between 10 to 12 hours to complete and because the terrain is flat, it made for an easy to moderate walk – my specialty.

"This is an incredibly beautiful stretch. The most popular in the province," my guide George Larter, of Cycling Tours PEI, said. Larter's company offers transportation and luggage transfer services so visitors don't need to carry everything with them.

I travelled in early October and stopped often to breathe in the fresh air while the sun shone overhead. I felt the crunch of fallen leaves under my feet as I marched toward some welcome solitude. This section of the Island Walk is also part of the Confederation Trail (which runs end-to-end across the province) and follows the south side of St. Peter's Bay along the shore to reveal an almost continuous vista of the Bay.

I can see wind-whipped waves heading for shore and the mouths of three rivers that sculpt a rocky shoreline. I stop on the Morell River Bridge to enjoy the breeze and, farther down the path, watch mussel buoys bob while lobster fishermen return with their daily catch.

Bold red, vibrant orange and golden yellow leaves make for a kaleidoscope of fall colours in the forested sections. It feels like I'm walking through a van Gogh painting. Blue jays fly by; their bright blue feathers contrast against the rich autumn colours. I try not to step on the fuzzy caterpillars trying to keep up with me and admire the cattle grazing in the distance. Nature was working its magic. I became reflective, thinking deep thoughts about my future with every step I took toward it.

Section 20 might have the most



Local guides offers transfers to trailheads and move luggage to the next overnight stop so hikers and bikers can travel light. PAUL BAGLOLE (BICYCLES); SANDER MEURS (BRIDGE); TAMARA ELLIOT (MURRAY HARBOUR).

stunning views, but just outside of Charlottetown, section 2 sent me along red dirt roads covered by a leafy canopy. Some parts had me walking along busier secondary roads, but they also took me to the charming seaside village of Victoria, where I stopped to enjoy a cold beer and lobster roll. Another part – sections 28 and 29 – led me to Nellie's Landing, where I spent a night in a floating cabernet wine barrel-turned-hotel room. But the path into St. Peter's Bay was the most memorable.

Some call the Island Walk "Canada's Camino" – I now understand why. It gave me time to think. It forced me to be alone with my thoughts, which can be a scary thing. And with no one else around (except maybe a few cyclists zipping by), I was able to challenge myself. The Walk is more than just slow-travel exploration. It's transformative, invigorating and memorable.

Special to The Globe and Mail



### HOW TO GET THERE

Charlottetown has direct flights from Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. There are outfitters listed on the Island Walk website that provide transfer services, including airport pickups. [theislandwalk.ca](http://theislandwalk.ca)



### WHERE TO STAY

Soothe sore muscles when you reach St. Peter's Bay at Mysa Nordic Spa & Resort. Rooms start from \$359 a night, spa access not included.



### WHAT TO BRING

All the usuals for day hiking: good walking shoes and trekking poles if you enjoy using them. Water, snacks, warm layers. Oh, and toilet paper. There are limited toilet facilities along the trails so be prepared to become one with nature.