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# Savour

THE GOOD LIFE



**COQ  
AU VIN**  
A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

**INDONESIAN  
FOOD GETS A  
MAKEOVER**

HOW TO  
PAIR YOUR  
FAVOURITE  
BEERS

**FREE  
WINE  
TASTING!**  
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guilt-free  
**gourmet  
meals**



LIVING  
IT UP

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photography ANDREW MARSHALL,  
GETTY IMAGES, CORBIS,  
DALVAY BY THE SEA

# taste of the

It may be small, but Canada's  
Prince Edward Island is heaven  
for seafood lovers



# atlantic



*Above and opposite:*  
ENJOY ULTRA-FRESH  
OYSTERS AND LOBSTERS  
PLUCKED STRAIGHT  
FROM THE OCEAN ON  
THE MANY FISHING  
TOURS AVAILABLE ON  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

It's mid-September and we are deep in the heart of Atlantic Canada's Nova Scotia, having just driven past a sign that indicates the halfway point between the equator and the North Pole. With the automatic set to cruise control and some cool sounds on the radio, we cut through a swathe of dense pine forest that stretches as far as the eye can see. After crossing the spectacular almost 13km-long Confederation Bridge, we arrive on Prince Edward Island – our final destination for a week-long gourmet travel experience.

Only 280km from tip to tip, Prince Edward Island (known locally as PEI) is Canada's tiniest province, but still manages to punch above its weight in the culinary world. Its pristine waters and beaches, in particular, produce some of the planet's finest seafood in a smorgasbord that's as inspiring as its magnificent red sands and salt-sprayed red cliffs. Foodies know it as shellfish heaven, thanks to its abundance of delicious local specialities such as oysters, lobsters, mussels, clams and scallops. PEI has several other qualities that recommend it too. In addition to its first-rate seafood, factors like stunning scenery, a moderate climate, friendly locals and plentiful activities all add to the island's appeal.

Our first port of call is PEI's capital Charlottetown, which contains The Great George – a gorgeous historic boutique hotel that dates back to the 1800s. Conveniently located in the heart of downtown, the hotel consists of 60 tastefully restored guest rooms housed within a cluster of 15 award-winning heritage buildings along Great George street, Charlottetown's most famous thoroughfare. With thoughts of the gastronomic adventures to come, we



excitedly clamber up the wooden steps to the porch of our private house, and turn the key in the lock to our home away from home for three nights.

### the great lobster hunt

Later in the afternoon, we stroll down to the waterfront, where we join Mark and Cody Jenkins, brothers and fourth-generation fishermen who have been operating their Top Notch Charters' lobster-fishing excursions for the past four years. "It used to be known as the 'poor man's food' here in PEI. But now, lobster's a local delicacy like no other," says Mark. "It's a big industry." And certainly one that has paid off well for the pair, who regularly takes customers on a "lobster-fishing crash course", in which guests get to haul two lobster traps and a crab trap in a span of two-and-a-half hours and, of course, finish off with the requisite lobster dinner.

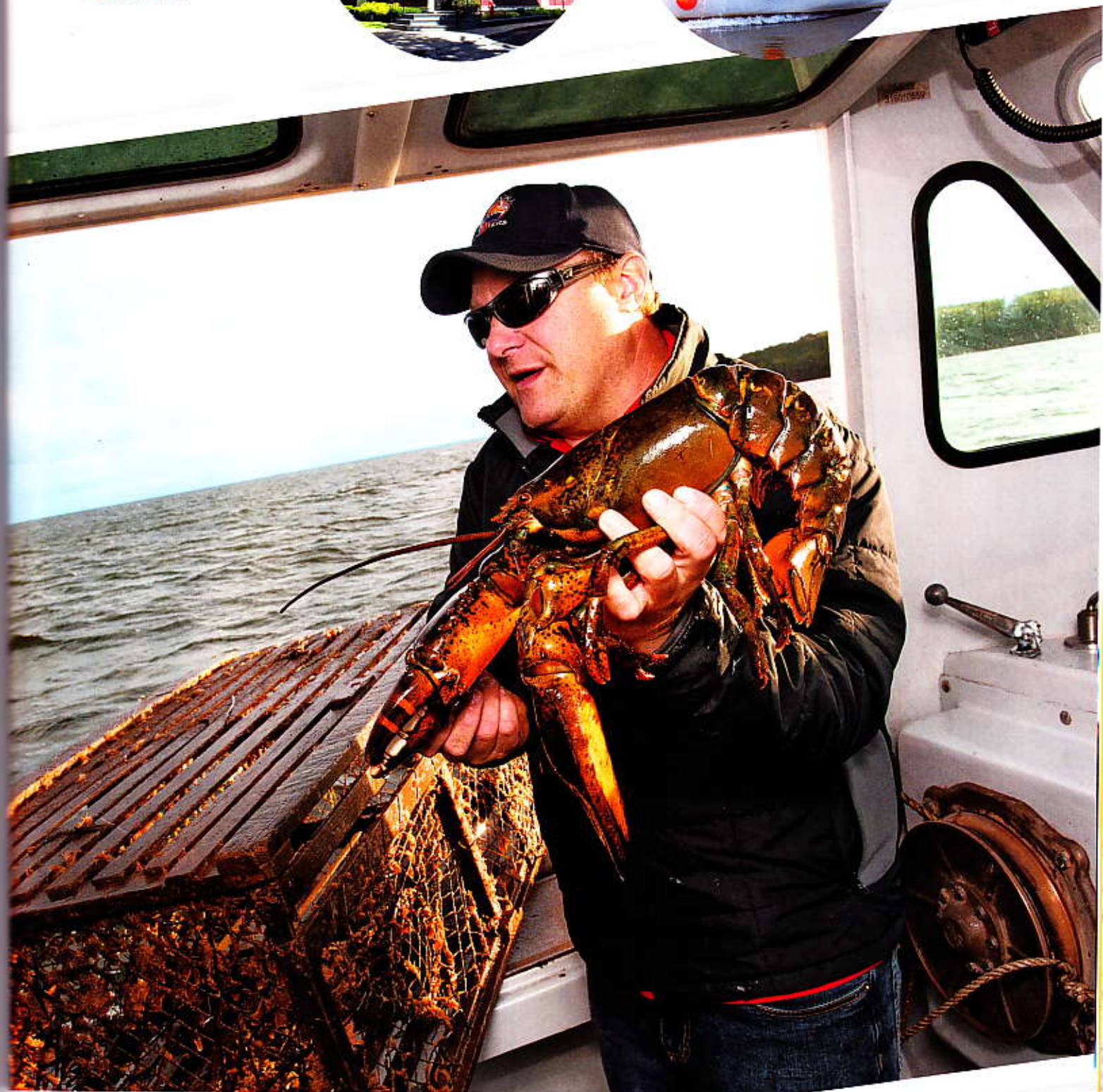
As the boat motors away from shore, Cody serves chilled drinks from the cooler, while Mark enthusiastically regales us with facts on all things lobster. "The largest one ever caught was in Nova Scotia – it was nearly 4ft long, 44 pounds and 130 years old," he says, illuminating us on the prized crustacean's life cycle before allowing us to play fishermen and haul traps.

Later on, over the crunching sounds and appreciative silence of guests busily tucking into a delicious supper

*Above, from left:*  
PURE UNPOLLUTED  
WATERS SURROUND  
PEI: THE GREAT  
GEORGE –  
CHARLOTTETOWN'S  
HISTORIC BOUTIQUE  
HOTEL; A LOBSTER  
BOAT RETURNS TO  
HARBOUR ON PEI'S  
WEST COAST.

*Right:*  
MARK JENKINS  
EXPLAINS THE FINER  
POINTS OF LOBSTER  
FISHING ON ONE  
OF TOP NOTCH  
CHARTERS' TOURS.

The pristine waters and beaches of Prince Edward Island produce some of the planet's finest seafood in a smorgasbord that's as inspiring as its magnificent red sands and salt-sprayed red cliffs.



LIVING  
IT UP



*Three:*  
SHUCKING OYSTERS  
AT CLADDAGH OYSTER  
HOUSE, A POPULAR  
SPOT FOR LOCALS AND  
TOURISTS ALIKE.

*Eight:*  
DINERS ENJOY A  
MAGNIFICENT SUNSET  
FROM THE DECK AT  
CLAM DIGGERS BEACH  
HOUSE & RESTAURANT  
ON PEI'S EAST COAST.





of lobster, potato salad and crusty rolls, Mark shares more about what life is like on the island. It's serious back-to-nature stuff when they're not conducting tours, with the brothers spending about 10 to 12 hours a day during the season on their lobster run checking traps. Winter is when they get a much-needed break. That's when, he says with a grin, they're true Canadians who play hockey and drink lots of beer.

Jokes aside, it's clear lobster fishing separates the men from the boys. The brothers make their own traps – cutting the trees, milling the timber and building about 200 traps at a time. The utilitarian pieces of equipment, too, have their own history. They are usually made of juniper wood (which is rot-resistant), and the Jenkins say there's still a trap in circulation, which their father built some 20 years ago.

The arrival of the lobster season each year is a highly anticipated event for locals like the Jenkins, and is tightly

woven into the culinary fabric of the island. You'll get seafood all year round, but there are some especially good times to go. PEI has a plentiful catch that runs from May to June on the island's north side, and August to September on the south. Whether it's enjoyed on a boat trip, at a picnic table in the backyard with friends or at a no-frills "lobster supper" held in dining halls and churches throughout the island, this is the classic PEI dining experience you shouldn't miss.

Two of the most renowned places here to enjoy a lobster supper are in New Glasgow (with its spectacular views of the River Clyde) and St Ann's.

Established in 1964 by Father Denis Gallant, the dinners at St Ann's began as a modest way to help pay off the mortgage on the new church, and were available for just one day a week. Almost 50 years later, the non-profit outfit is still running strong, serving delicious homemade food six days a week, with a menu where the lobster reigns supreme.

But there are other contenders to the seafood throne too. No trip to PEI is complete without indulging in another of its signature seafoods – oysters. Just round the corner from our residence in Great George Street in Charlottetown is the intimate Claddagh Oyster House – one of the best places in PEI to savour the molluscs. Sitting at the bar, we order a dozen on the half shell (each with evocative names like Lucky Limes, Raspberry Points and Shiny Seas), and settle down to watch the servers ply their trade.

Behind the bar, waiter and oyster shucker Brett Wilson is hard at work. He deftly feels an oyster to find its most vulnerable point of entry, then skilfully sweeps the blade of his knife through the muscle connected to the



shell. Within moments, an exquisite display of a dozen of the plump molluscs are placed in front of us ready to be savoured unadorned. Or, if you insist, with a squeeze of lemon or a splash of hot sauce. And to wash it all down with? “A stout or chilled sauvignon blanc,” which, according to Wilson, are “the perfect partners for oysters.”

Other notable places to sample seafood on PEI include Sims Corner Steakhouse & Oyster Bar, Carr’s Oyster Bar in Stanley Bridge (on the north coast) and Clam Diggers Beach House & Restaurant in historic Georgetown on the island’s east coast.

Clam Diggers is more than just a place to eat – it’s an island institution. It’s also typical of many of the island’s restaurants, where seafood comes straight from the boats of local fishmongers and fishermen. Scallops arrive in cheesecloth sacks, lobsters caught within a mile or two are dropped off and fish like whole halibut come packed in ice, fresh from the ocean. It’s the perfect backdrop against which to spend a memorable evening – try tucking into their delicious Clam Digger mussels and Ocean Fresh chowder, while sipping a chilled beer and taking in the sunset from the restaurant’s oceanside deck.

### **oysters 101**

Next morning, we drive to Fernwood on PEI’s south coast

for Future Seafoods’ Tong & Shuck oyster-harvesting tour. The experience proves surprisingly insightful, giving us an in-depth understanding of how the molluscs make the journey from ocean to plate.

“At first, we didn’t think anybody would ever pay to see people oyster fishing. But you know what? People love the tour,” says co-owner Brian Lewis, as we hop aboard a traditional oyster dory from an idyllic beach setting in Bedeque Bay.

“We didn’t dress the tour up for anybody. This is the real thing. On our tour, people get to try their hand at harvesting oysters, learn how to shuck them and eat the freshest ones they will ever taste,” says Lewis. Guests then head back to the plant where they’ll get to see how oysters are graded and packaged, following the process all the way to the point where the molluscs are loaded onto the back of a truck to be shipped to places like Boston.

Out on the water’s mirror-like surface, Lewis expertly demonstrates the art of oyster tonging, before we have a go ourselves. Using his two oyster tongs in a scissor-like action on the estuary bed, he digs up a catch and places it on a small platform attached to the boat. Among the weeds and mud are the jewels of PEI’s seafood crown. A typical oyster will take three years to mature, and any that don’t make the size limit go back in the water to grow some more.



## Other activities & attractions



**Wander the colonial-style streets of Old Charlottetown (above),** PEI’s capital and the birthplace of Canada.

**Enjoy typical maritime scenery** like weathered fishing boats, neatly stacked lobster traps and fishermen’s houses in the atmospheric fishing village of North Rustico on PEI’s north coast. You can do this by cycling along the coastal tracks or paddling the surrounding waters in a kayak. Bike and kayak rentals are available at Outside Expeditions in North Rustico.

**Visit Green Gables Heritage Place** in Cavendish, the original site that inspired Lucy M Montgomery to pen her novel *Anne of Green Gables*.

**Attend the annual PEI International Shellfish Festival,** one of the island’s most colourful fetes. Happening in September, it features gourmet chefs, celebrity cooks and world-class oyster shuckers.



**Book a Taste The Town tour** – a three-hour culinary walking tour of historic Charlottetown. During the tour, you’ll get to visit several venues offering the island’s unique foods, including the town’s premier seafood market (above) on the waterfront, the Gahan House Pub & Brewery and the Spirit Shop, where you can try a vodka made from locally grown potatoes.

[www.experiencepei.ca](http://www.experiencepei.ca)



*Above, clockwise from top left:*  
DALVAY BY THE SEA; MURRAY HARBOUR; GREAT COASTAL VIEWS AT THE WEST POINT LIGHTHOUSE; THE COVEHEAD HARBOUR LIGHTHOUSE.

*Opposite, top:*  
AN AERIAL AND INTERIOR VIEW OF HISTORIC MANSION DALVAY BY THE SEA.

Lewis quickly shucks an oyster and savours its briny flavour. “What a finish on that one – it’s like tasting the ocean,” he proclaims, tossing the empty shell back into the oyster bed.

Post-induction into the world of oysters, we cross to the island’s north coast. Standing proudly near the National Park, and overlooking the beach named after it, is the historic mansion of Dalvay by the Sea, which dates back to 1895. Easily the most stunning place to stay on the north shore, it recently drew much attention when William and Kate, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, visited as part of their royal tour to Canada in July last year, and sampled the chef’s seafood dishes here.

On our last day in PEI, we follow the scenic North Cape Coastal Drive to the historic West Point Lighthouse, where we will spend the night. Built in 1875, sections of the former lighthouse keepers’ quarters have been converted into an elegant 13-room inn – the only one of its kind in Canada.

After visiting the museum’s extensive collection of artefacts and climbing the tower for a breathtaking view, we sit down on our own private deck for a gentle respite. With the sound of waves crashing in the Northumberland Strait all around us, we uncork a bottle of wine and shuck a few oysters in a fitting tribute to Canada’s Prince Edward Island, a true seafood paradise.