Come wander.

Ontario’s HIGHLANDS

Discover our HIDDEN GEMS
Experience RECREATIONAL GEOLOGY IN ONTARIO’S HIGHLANDS

Feed your sense of curiosity by exploring the diverse geology of Ontario’s Highlands.

Here, you can get up close and personal with one of the most unusual and rich geological settings in all of Canada.

Be transported back 500 million years by exploring a cave full of fossils that will ignite your imagination of the creatures that once inhabited our earth.

Feel the exhilaration of discovering buried treasure in places you would least expect.
Geology is like an intriguing detective story — if you can learn to read the rocks, you will uncover the secret history of our Earth.

In Ontario’s Highlands, our geology impacts everything around us, from our land to our people. You can discover its mysteries and wonders around every corner throughout our region, taking in unique experiences that will bring you closer to nature and will nurture your soul.

Share your stories with us!

Look for the mobile phone symbol in this guide to discover the secret locations of our geo-selfie signs.

• Snap your geo-selfie
• Share it with us and your fellow rockhounds

@ontarioshighlands
@onhighlands
@onhighlands

#ohrocks

Come wander.
Look at our earth in a different way

Change your perspective by experiencing recreational geology from all points of view in #MyHaliburtonHighlands. Discover some of the most extraordinary crystal specimens and rare mineral species in the world by digging for treasure in Wilberforce, Tory Hill and Gooderham or head above ground to learn how bedrock, minerals, sediments, and the agents of geological change affect our landscape, and every living thing that thrives here.
HIGHLANDS EAST MINERAL CLAIMS
Home to one of only a handful of mines in Canada to have been worked commercially for gemstones, Highlands East has long drawn travelling rockhounds in search of a bit of bling, but it also happens to host one of the highest concentrations of rare mineral species in all of Ontario’s Highlands.

The Desmont Mine, Schickler Fluorite Occurrence, Essonville Roadcut and Titanite Hill are just a few of the rewarding public destinations you can visit — all within just a few minutes’ drive of each other! Stop by the municipal office or Agnew’s General Store in Wilberforce to get started today!

YOURS OUTDOORS
Designated an “Ontario Signature Experience,” the Haliburton Rocks! tour is not to be missed. This guided adventure includes a geologist-led hike to world-class sites of unique minerals and crystals, lunch and mineral collecting at the Schickler Occurrence and other sites.
GREENMANTLE FARM
Even though Haliburton is home to some of the best rockhounding in Ontario’s Highlands, not every great mineral location is a collecting site. Take a guided mineral eco-tour of undisturbed deposits to see rare minerals such as fluororichterite, apatite, hornblende and tremolite and learn how geology affects the landscape and the environment.

GEOMORPHOLOGY HIKE
You know you’ve arrived in Ontario’s Highlands when straight, orderly roads start to bend to the will of hilly terrain and rocky outcrops. Geomorphology is the shape of our earth. Find out more about why our landscape looks the way it does as you hike this scenic 3.5 kilometre loop.

DORSET LOOKOUT TOWER
Finish off your geomorphology adventure with a picnic lunch and a stunning overview of Ontario’s Highlands’ rugged landscape from this 30-metre fire tower lookout — one of the region’s most popular vantages for the best fall colours in the province!

NATURE’S PLACE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE
“The Land Between” is an area of extraordinary biodiversity that straddles the St. Lawrence Lowlands and the Canadian Shield. Learn about this unique ecotone and explore geology’s fundamental role as the foundation of our Earth through fun activities and great natural heritage displays at this straw-bale-built centre in Minden Mills.
MINDEN WILDCATER PRESERVE

The course of rivers and roads can be dictated by the land, but people and water have the power to alter the landscape in return. In Minden, these agents of geological change are hard at work turning these stunning natural rapids into an Olympic-calibre whitewater course.

GEOCACHING CAPITAL OF CANADA

You might not think of geology when you hear the word ‘geocaching,’ but ‘geo’ means earth. A rich mining heritage is an important part of our geological legacy. It’s no surprise, then, that when you start exploring Highlands East, you’ll find that there are some great caches hidden in old mines, and many more yet to be discovered. Ask at Agnew’s General Store in Wilberforce for details!
Find a new gem with an old story

Learn, grow and discover something new in Hastings, the heart of our “rich” geological history and hub for some of the world’s most unique collections of gems, minerals and crystals. Between deep-blue sodalite, flaky mica and gemmy green apatite, lie tales of a culture and people that have shaped a way of life throughout Ontario’s Highlands.
HERITAGE TRAIN STATION
For over 30 years, the Heritage Train Station in the heart of Bancroft has been the jewel in the crown of Canada’s Mineral Capital. Now completely restored and better than ever, it is home to the Bancroft Gem and Mineral Club Museum.

BANCROFT MINERAL MUSEUM
Beautiful crystals and gemstones from Ontario’s Highlands grace the shelves of every major public and private mineral collection around the world. But don’t worry, we’ve saved the best for you!

Owned and operated by the Bancroft Gem and Mineral Club, this world-class display features the finest collection of Bancroft-area minerals to be found anywhere.

CN ROCK PILE
From 1927 to 1939, this unique deposit was worked for nepheline which is used in making ceramic and glass. Not commercially successful as the deposit was small and contained too many impurities, some of the last shipments were left beside the railroad tracks and today is a popular collecting site. Minerals to be found include biotite, calcite, cancrinite, scapolite, sodalite, natrolite, apatite and zircons. Stop by the tourist information centre in Bancroft for directions.
PRINCESS SODALITE MINE

The Princess Sodalite Mine, named for the British aristocracy’s keen interest in this royal-blue gem, is one of our most unique and storied recreational geology attractions. Proprietor Andy Christie is a wealth of knowledge about the area’s mineral resources and offers collecting in the “Rock Farm”, mineral samples for sale, handcrafted jewelry, and of course, sodalite — which he mines on-site himself.

LAKESIDE GEMS

At Lakeside Gems, you will find a large selection of semi-precious gemstones, minerals, rockhounding tools, rock tumblers, jewelry, gifts, decor, metaphysical items and more. Whether you’re from the Bancroft area or just visiting, you will find something new and interesting every time you visit.
EAGLE’S NEST LOOKOUT
Get a bird’s-eye view of how our unique geology gives rise to the iconic landscape of Ontario’s Highlands from high atop one of its most striking features. Eagle’s Nest is a 60-metre rock wall on the edge of the York River Valley with the town of Bancroft nestled below.

Experience MORE
• Visit the annual Rockhound Gemboree every August long weekend for a chance to learn how to identify different types of gems and minerals, and even pan for gold!
• Want more great opportunities to dig for buried treasure with exclusive access to special field-trip destinations? Join the Central Canadian Federation of Mineralogical Societies Club. ccfms.ca
Haliburton Highlands p.4
1. Dorset Fire Tower Lookout
2. Geomorphology Hike
3. Nature’s Place
4. Minden Wild Water Preserve
5. Greenmantle Farm
6. Geocaching Capital of Canada
7. Highlands East Municipal Office
8. Desmont Mine
9. Schickler Flourite Occurrence
10. Essonville Roadcut
11. Titanite Hill
12. Yours Outdoors

Hastings p.8
13. Lakeside Gems
14. Mineral Museum/Train Station
15. Eagle’s Nest
16. Princess Sodalite Mine
17. Marmora Tourism Office
18. Marmoraton Mine
19. Miners’ Loop
20. Richardson Gold Mine
21. Rockhound Gemboree
22. CN Rock Pile
Ottawa Valley p.16
23. Rose Quartz Pit
24. Beryl Pit
25. Ontario’s Highest Populated Place
26. Bonnechere Museum
27. John Egan Geoheritage Trail
28. Bonnechere Caves
29. Fourth Chute Falls
30. Calabogie Peaks

Ontario Parks p.22
36. Silent Lake Provincial Park
37. Egan Chutes Provincial Park
38. Bonnechere Provincial Park
39. Westmeath Provincial Park
40. Ottawa River Provincial Park
41. Bon Echo Provincial Park
42. Sharbot Lake Provincial Park
43. Silver Lake Provincial Park
44. Murphys Point Provincial Park

Lanark County p.20
31. Tatlock Quarry
32. Matheson House Museum
33. Civitan Court
34. Metcalfe Geoheritage Park
35. Silver Queen Mine
Calling all mine enthusiasts!

Step into the shoes of one of Hastings’ miners during the height of the mining industry by exploring the very places where they worked, lived and thrived. As you wander the sites, you’ll be able to imagine a life built on hard work, the excitement of a gold rush, and even what it was like to unwind at the end of a long day. The Miners’ Loop self-guided tour features historical plaques harking back to a time when weary miners would travel from town to town for a Friday night drink and catch up on the latest gossip from the neighbouring camps. Stop into the Marmora Tourism Information Centre for directions to get you started!

ONTARIO’S FIRST GOLD MINE

In 1866, a local clerk fell into a cave studded with gold while he was exploring a neighbour’s farm for copper mineralization. Although short-lived, this discovery sparked a gold rush that would rival the early days of the Klondike, 30 years later. Mounties, prospectors, homesteaders and scoundrels — hear their stories as you tour the Richardson Mine discovery location and the ruins of the original townsite of Eldorado.
THE MINERS’ LOOP

MARMORATON MINE
Famous for its marble deposits and being one of southern Ontario’s richest iron deposits in its day, the Marmoraton Mine today is spectacular water-filled pit which covers 75 acres and reaches depths of more than 600 feet, qualifying it as an artificial lake! The viewing area with interpretive panels offers a view you won’t soon forget.

DELORO MINE
Originally worked for gold alongside the Richardson Mine, arsenic soon became its major commodity and its unfortunate legacy. Later, the arsenic-rich ores from the silver mining camps of Cobalt, Ontario, would also be shipped here for special processing procedures locally pioneered. This site is one of the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks’ largest clean-up efforts in Southern Ontario history. Today, innovative techniques are being employed to contain hazardous waste and return the environment to its natural state.

HASTINGS TRAIL
This walking trail traces a geological feature known as an angular conformity. Two complete cycles of decay and restoration of the land upon the globe have occurred.

MILLSIDE PARK
Visit this picturesque greenspace featuring interpretive signage and what remains of the Old Pearce Mill.
Uncover “the story of our earth”

Choose your own adventure in the Ottawa Valley, where the billion-year-old “Story of Our Earth” comes to life.

As you marvel at stunning rock formations, drive through scenic vistas, wander through caves and along the beautiful shorelines of the Ottawa Valley, you will connect with the land in a personal way. Experience first-hand what it may have been like long ago when erupting volcanoes, gigantic mountain ranges, advancing glaciers and ancient oceans were the norm in this breathtaking region.
BONNECHERE MUSEUM
Welcome to the Ordovician Fossil Capital of Canada! The Ordovician Period (450–500 million years ago) left an indelible mark, not only on the bedrock of the Ottawa Valley, but especially on the village of Eganville. At the time, warm tropical seas teemed with life and deep ocean sediments were being laid down over parts of what is now Ontario’s Highlands. These sediments were eventually cemented and uplifted to become the fossil-rich limestones that can be seen in much of the town’s historic architecture. Stop in to the Bonnechere Museum for guided fossil hunts, interpretive walking tours, and displays of local fossils and minerals.

JOHN EGAN GEOHERITAGE TRAIL
Stroll along the shore of the Bonnechere River on beautifully maintained trails to view reclaimed wildlife habitat, historic sites, and five acres of prime fossil hunting grounds — all right in the heart of Eganville!

BONNECHERE CAVES
The Bonnechere Caves are a true marvel of the geological diversity of Ontario’s Highlands. In 1853, a government surveyor made the first note on the caves’ existence — two words: subterranean channels. One hundred years later, a WWII flying ace tied a rope around his waist and rediscovered Ontario’s most extensive underground caverns. Visit the caves today and relive his harrowing adventure.
FOURTH CHUTE FALLS

One of the most beautiful and intriguing locations in North Algona Wilberforce is indeed the Fourth Chute Falls of the Bonnechere River. Pull over to snap pictures of the rolling water rushing over ancient sheets of limestone. Look down to discover giant coral fossils, cephalopods, trilobites and more Ordovician-period secrets fully visible right there in the rock beneath your feet!

ONTARIO’S HIGHEST POPULATED PLACE

Peer into the depths of ‘The Valley’ from high atop Ontario’s Highest Populated Peak. A great place to stretch your legs after a stunning drive up one of Ontario’s historic colonization roads, the Opeongo Line, walk around the abandoned radar base at Foymount. The lookout provides captivating views of the Ottawa Valley. Also, it’s a challenging cycling destination from the village of Eganville.
AQUAROSE MINERALS

The Beryl Pit & Rose Quartz Pit

Whether you’re looking for fine examples of rare minerals, pretty rocks for your garden, gem-quality amazonite, rose quartz and aquamarine, or just something different to do with the family this summer, you’ll find it all in Quadeville. Quadeville isn’t just the former getaway of notorious gangster Al Capone, it’s also your chance to find real gemstones, right here in Ontario’s Highlands! The Beryl Pit is accessible between May and October as a self-guided experience; permits may be purchased at Kauffeldt’s General Store. Guided visits to the Rose Quartz Pit hosted by owners Dave and Renee are available by appointment. Be sure to ask about their handcrafted, local gemstone jewellery too!

CALABOGIE PEAKS

Traverse to the highest peak in the Madawaska Highlands — Dickson Mountain at Calabogie Peaks — to a beautiful view reaching all the way to the Gatineau Hills of Quebec. Dickson Mountain is approximately 2.5 billion years old and sits on the edge of the Canadian Shield. The rock beneath your feet is Precambrian igneous rock called granite and gneiss.
In Lanark County, geology is a way of life. Back in the 1800s, it spawned a backyard mining industry, and today, the stories of original families and their struggles are conveyed through its unique landmarks, buildings, museums (and even the best maple syrup in the whole province).
SILVER QUEEN MINE

The Silver Queen Mine is the focal point for geoheritage programming, festivals, and interpretive activities organized by the Friends of Murphys Point Provincial Park. It’s also a unique opportunity to go for an underground tour of a turn-of-the-century mica mine.

MATHESON HOUSE MUSEUM

Meet Dr. Wilson (1798–1881), Ontario’s Highlands’ first recreational geologist. Help us celebrate the amateur contribution to science as you marvel at his discoveries and the buried treasures of Lanark County in this brand new geology display.

METCALFE GEOHERITAGE PARK

The Metcalfe Geoheritage Park was the first such municipal park in Ontario. Here you will learn about the rocky environment that makes up Ontario’s Highlands.

TATLOCK MARBLE QUARRY

For a look at how mining is still an important industry in Lanark County today, take in the awe-inspiring view of this operating marble quarry. Be sure to stop to explore one of the quaint villages along the way!

ROCK CYCLING

Cycling is a great way to take in many of these important geoheritage sites. Starting at Matheson House, you can pick up a self-guided brochure for a 42-kilometre loop that will take you on a tour, including Civitan Court and the perthite discovery.
Disconnect to reconnect

Get lost in the peaceful wilderness and breathtaking geology of one of Ontario’s Highlands’ 30 parks, including provincial parks. Far away from crowds and as close to nature as you can get, you’ll feel like you’re the first person to ever set foot on one of our pristine geology trails or have access to spectacular natural formations like Mazinaw Rock. Here, you’ll truly have an opportunity to travel the unknown.

EXPLORE OUR REGION’S ONE-OF-A-KIND NATURAL WONDERS AT THE FOLLOWING PARKS:

**BON ECHO**
The central feature of Bon Echo Park is the towering cliffs that rise out of Mazinaw Lake. You may have seen them in paintings by the Group of Seven, but nothing compares to the real thing!

**EGAN CHUTE**
There are numerous old mines and classic mineral locations along the scenic York River, just minutes from the town of Bancroft. Water access and trails provide excellent opportunities to explore our unique geology.

**MURPHYS POINT**
From the Heritage Mica Days celebrations with costumed interpreters and fun family activities, to underground tours of the Silver Queen Mine, Murphys
Point Provincial Park takes geoheritage to a deeper level. Call to book your campsite today!

**BONNECHERE**
The Ottawa-Bonnechere Graben is one of the most significant physiographic features of our region. It defines the Ottawa Valley and has influenced settlement and trade for thousands of years. Explore the storied waters of the Ottawa Valley through geological, archaeological, and heritage programming.

**WESTMEATH**
The Ottawa River near Westmeath is home to many of the outfitters and experience providers that make the Valley Canada’s Whitewater Capital. Whether you’re shooting the rapids or touring the parks, be sure to scan the limestone banks for ancient fossils.
Come wander.

Geology is like a detective story — if you can learn to read the rocks, you will uncover the secret history of our Earth.

Discover more at comewander.ca

#OHROCKS