

Vacation Guide

Try a farm holiday ... Prince Edward Island

Getting up with the birds to milk the cows is just routine to Prince Edward Island dairy farmer Dan MacPherson. But to those who spend their Island vacation on the MacPherson farm, it's the start of another exciting day.

Dan and Ruth MacPherson are among the Island's most successful and popular tourist hosts, the farm vacation families.

"We can't get away as often as we'd like for holidays," Ruth laughs, "so we have the vacationers come to us. We've had visitors from all over Canada, the United States and even Japan."

The MacPhersons first became involved with Farm Vacations in 1975, as a "trial effort" and soon found they were having fun. Their large farm house sits about a quarter of a mile from the main highway at Oyster Bed Bridge near Prince Edward Island's famous white sand beaches. Since Prince Edward Island is Canada's smallest province, nothing is very far away from anything else on the island. The capital and only city, Charlottetown, is 23 km (14 miles) from the MacPherson farm. "That's close enough to have dinner and be in town for a play at the Charlottetown Festival," Dan points out. "We're close enough to the Green Gables golf course that some of our visitors play nine or eighteen holes in the evening."

Eating is an important part of a farm vacation on Prince Edward Island. Guests at the MacPherson's start the day with a huge breakfast. No need to rise with the sun to milk the cows; breakfast is served when the guests get up. "Some of the kids get up when I do, but most of the adults sleep in a bit," Dan chuckles. "We had one fellow here who slept until mid-morning every day. Said that he got up early every morning for work and he wasn't about to get up early on his vacation!"

Some guests are content to let Ruth do the shopping for steaks, fresh seafood, farm-grown vegetables and Island fruit to keep the table groaning under the weight of home cooking. Other guests prefer a hand in making dinner. "So we give them a bucket and spade to dig clams down on the river beach back of the



FARM VACATIONS - Inexpensive farm vacations are a holiday treat for city folk. On Prince Edward Island, the cost of a farm vacation can be as low as \$10 a day for 2 people plus meals. The friendly farm hosts are experts on wild berry picking and clam digging at some of the best beaches.

(P.E.I. Tourism Photo)

house," Ruth explains, "then we steam the clams, dip them in melted butter and have a great feed. Some people go deep sea fishing or try for some sea trout or salmon in the river. In berry season somebody usually picks a quart or so to put on cereal or to have with some fresh cream."

As if a big dinner was not enough, Ruth serves a "bed-time snack" of tea, coffee and some fresh baked cookies or bread and jam around 9:30 or 10 o'clock. Everyone gathers around and helps themselves. "It's a good time for everyone to get together

and perhaps talk about what they're going to do tomorrow. We try to help them with directions or suggestions as much as we can."

Those hearty meals fuel visitors for the many activities on Prince Edward Island. The nearby National Park offers extensive white sand beaches, an 18-hole championship golf course and many attractions to keep guests busy. Many visitors make a pilgrimage to the Anne of Green Gables house in the park.

"Most of the adults have read the 'Anne' books"

Ruth says, "and after visiting the house the youngsters end up reading them too." Others book seats at the Charlottetown Festival where the musical stage version of "Anne of Green Gables" plays along with other productions throughout July and August.

Touring by car on Prince Edward Island is easy and convenient with the self-guiding day trips that cover small areas of the province. Most day trips are circular and cover from 80 to 100 km (50-60 miles), providing a close and intimate look along the highways and byways at activities and sights visitors often miss. The day trip brochures are available at restaurants, motels, farm vacation homes and at the Island's Tourism Information Centres.

"Sometimes we pack up ourselves and our guests and go to the lobster supper in New Glasgow," Dan reports with obvious delight. The community-style dinner in the village hall features home-cooked food, fresh boiled lobster and homemade desserts, with free seconds of everything except lobster. For those who don't like lobster, a great roast beef dinner is available.

"We really like to have children among the guests," Ruth MacPherson says. "We have the usual assortment of farm cats and dogs and lots of room for kids to run." Children are allowed to play as loudly as they like in the fields without disturbing anyone. "This is probably a great vacation for the parents too," Dan adds, "especially if they live in an apartment in the city the rest of the year."

Sometimes the MacPhersons' grandchildren come over for a visit and join in with the visitors. The

grandchildren, of course, know all the "secret places" where the best clams can be dug and how to climb the trees that run along the fence line between the fields.

"One of the best parts of being in the Farm Vacation program is the friends we make," Ruth smiles, turning the snapshots taken of past visitors. "We exchange cards at Christmas and they write when they have new babies or something special happens." Many visitors return year after year, making reservations for the following year before their vacation is over. Because the guests and hosts usually become such good friends, tourism officials suggest that visitors pay in advance. It is often difficult to do business with good friends.

The rate at Prince Edward Island farm vacation homes average about \$10 to \$15 per room for two people and about \$2 per person for a full breakfast and \$5 per person for a full dinner. For vacationers who want to prepare their own meals some farm vacation homes offer guest kitchens complete with refrigerators, pots and pans, china and cutlery.

Farm vacation homes are found in all parts of Prince Edward Island. For listings and rates, write Tourism Services, P.O. Box 940, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island C1A 7M5. Take comfortable clothing that can stand a bit of rough wear, rubber boots, camera, a hearty appetite and a sense of humour. Then get set for a great holiday.

Travel tips for in-flight comfort

When traveling by air, try to pack only what you can carry aboard the plane. This permits you to change your plans enroute, and eliminates the possibility of lost or delayed baggage.

If you plan to work during


your flight, consider traveling first class where you will have more room.

Window seats are best for sleeping. Aisle seats give you leg stretching room and accommodate carry-on luggage.

Non-smokers should ask

for a seat at least five rows away from the smoking section. Any closer and you might as well be sitting with smokers.

You may want to consider staying at hotels or motels near airports to avoid driving in the city.



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