

fishing, wood carvings, pure woollen blankets, old-fashioned quilts, hand-crafted jewelry . . . a treasure chest of collectors' items are awaiting you.

It is advisable to reserve in advance if you wish to rent one of the cabins in the vicinity. There are local camping sites and charming seaside hotels-motels providing a marvellous view of Percé Rock, again reservations required. If time is not a problem, your vacation plans could include a tour of Montréal or Québec City as well as the Gaspé. Contact a local travel agent before leaving home for details on economical package tours. □

## A canoeist's park

by Tony Sloan

Finding La Mauricie National Park, about 64 km (40 miles) north of Trois Rivières, Québec, may involve a verbal inquiry or two but the reward is worth the effort. Whether you speak French or English, you will find the residents of Trois Rivières or Shawinigan ready to aid and direct you.

La Mauricie is a relatively new (1970) park. It's rapid development has coincided with the rebirth of the very interest that, for nomadic Indians, made the Mattawin and St. Maurice Rivers the natural water highway between the St. Lawrence valley and the interior. La Mauricie is a canoeist's park. Park naturalist, Bernard Jolicoeur, obtained a fine quality canoe from the rental service located on Lake Wapizagonke and we paddled off in the warm morning sun. Our first stop was at the ancient Indian pictographs on the high cliffs across the narrow lake, where we shot a few pictures after wetting the pictographs down to bring the colors out. The ochre designs are very old and their origin is uncertain.

La Mauricie has an impressive array of heavily forested mountains rolling back from river valleys and lakes. The park marks the transitional zone between the southern deciduous forests and the boreal conifers extending to the north. The resulting intermix includes 36



species of trees and corresponding assortment of fauna. The initial onslaught of timber cutters stripped the area of the white pine climax forest. They were followed by the fir harvesters for pulp and paper. The region then became the vast private preserve of a hunting and fishing club which accounts for the almost total recovery and regrowth of the existing mixed forest today.

We paddled by small sandy beaches and the 'civilized' facilities of the narrow lakes and entered the narrow and meandering Shawinigan River. We viewed an active beaver house and pulled in at the weathered wood and timbered spillway of an old logging dam. The ancient structure still helps to maintain water levels and remains an important artifact depicting the human history of the river. Below the dam, the Shawinigan narrows to a turbulent ribbon of white water sparkling between walls of green forest. A contemplative spot particularly suited for fly fishing towards day's end.

We retraced our route and shore-cruised by rocky cliffs. Naturalist, Jolicoeur, commented on the geology and identified shoreline vegetation. Much of the park flora may bloom and fade in a relatively short cycle so park naturalists are sometimes hard pressed to keep abreast of what's on show from one week to the next. We eventually left the lake and canoed up a winding narrow stream until we encountered a small

falls. Here we beached our canoe and switched to a hiking trail. The trail paralleled the mountain stream and eventually veered off through heavy forest and ascended a high ridge overlooking the valley.

The trail ends at a lofty viewpoint overlooking a beautiful island-studded lake sheltered by forested mountains. We lunched at the modern and well equipped picnic grounds. We relied on the snack bar for our vittles and beverage, but each picnic table is equipped with a metal hibachi for preparing hot food.

Campsites within the park (no other accommodation) are laid out in tree-shaded grounds and are equipped with fireplace and picnic table, graded tent site and with easy access to a communal water supply and modern, well maintained public washrooms. The park visitor may well begin his stay by touring the nature interpretive building where terrariums, aquariums and photo exhibits present a concise overview of the park ecology and interpretive activities. A guided nature tour by canoes may be scheduled followed by a lecture and slide presentation at the communal tent theater at night or, perhaps, a hike under the stars for a talk on astronomy.

Further details and informative literature can be obtained on La Mauricie and other national parks in Canada by contacting Parks Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0H6. □