



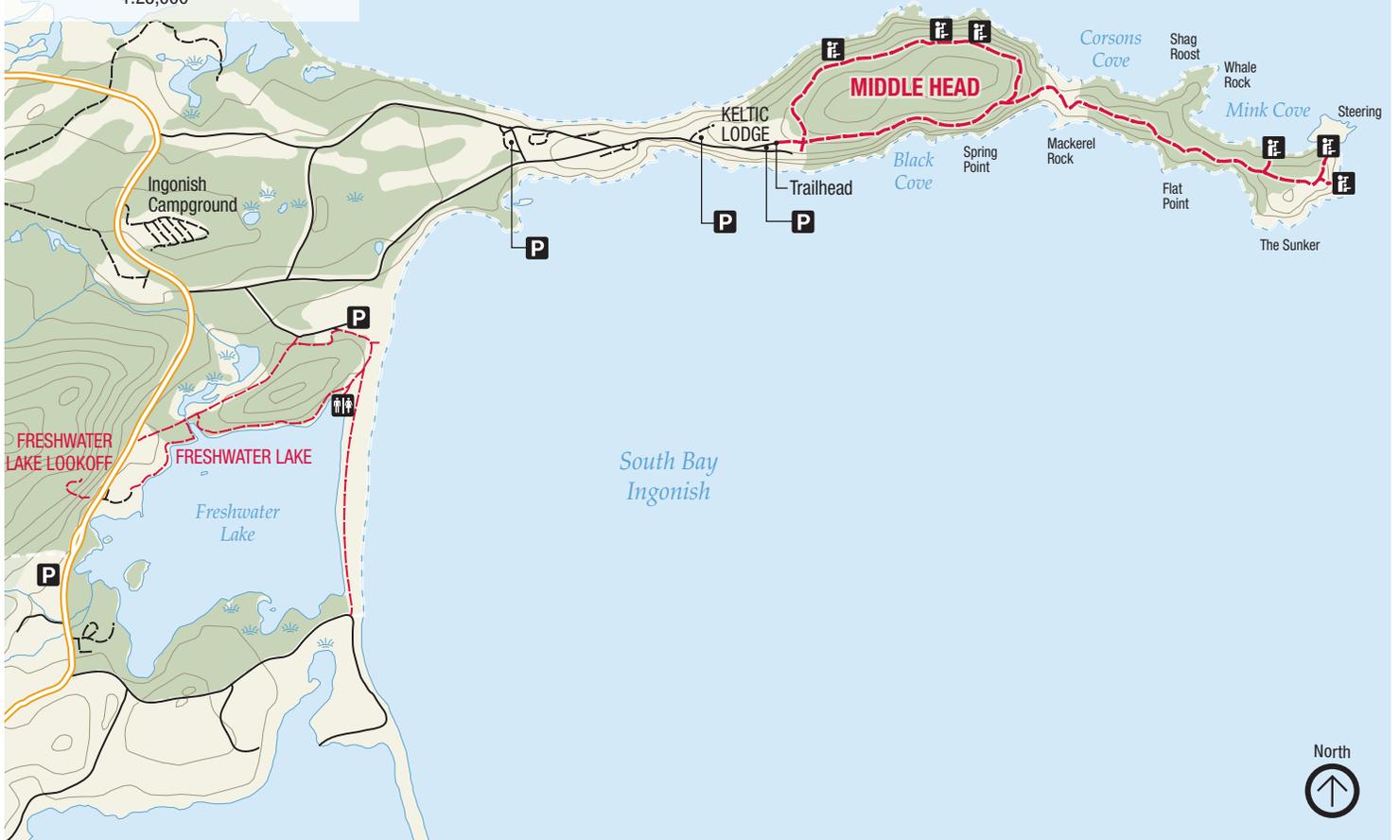
Middle Head

CAPE BRETON HIGHLANDS
NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA

- Parking
- Washroom
- Lookoff
- Hiking Trail
- Cabot Trail
- Paved Road
- Unpaved Road
- Park Boundary
- Contour (interval 10m)

0 200 400 600 800m

1:23,000



TRAIL INFORMATION

General	The trail follows a long, narrow peninsula separating two ocean bays, ending on headland cliffs overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, Cape Smokey and Ingonish Island. Opportunities to see seabirds, seals, whales, bald eagles as well as fishing boats in the early summer.	Length	3.8km (2.4mi) return, partial loop
		Elevation	10-50m (30-165ft)
		Time	1 - 1.5 hours

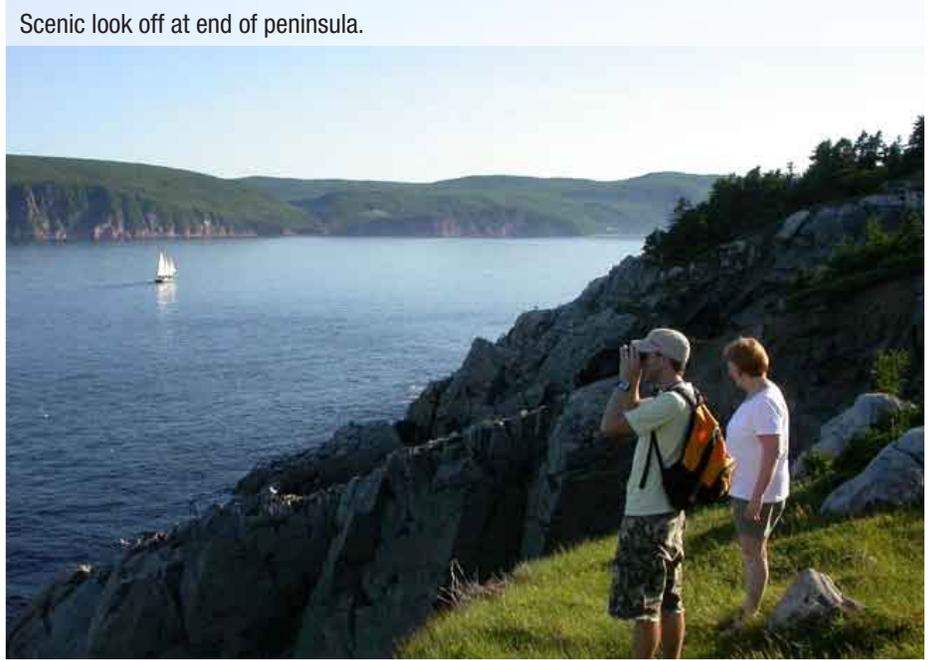


Black Guillemot



© A.Richard

Scenic look off at end of peninsula.



Harbour Seal Pup



Lupines



Leather Back Turtle



Steep rocky cliffs on both sides of peninsula.



Whalewatching from headlands.



© N.Boisvert

Gannets soaring and diving are a feast for the eyes.



Jean-Guy Béliveau



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TRAIL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

<p>Significant Features</p>	<p>The Middle Head Trail showcases the spectacular ocean scenery and marine environment found in northern Cape Breton. The interface of mountains and ocean creates a variety of inter-tidal and coastal habitats, including barren headlands, rocky shores, cobble beaches, sandy coves and estuaries, all of which can be seen from the Middle Head Trail. Panoramic views overlook the Atlantic Ocean, coastal communities, rugged coastline, and unique landforms such as Cape Smokey and Ingonish Island.</p>	<p>Trail Facilities</p>	<p>Trail head orientation sign with map, interpretive signs, benches on trail, lookoffs. Ample parking at trailhead at end of Keltic road, suitable for all vehicle sizes. <i>Nearby:</i> Ingonish Information Centre (park maps, exhibits, washrooms, universal access), Keltic Lodge (restaurants, coffee shop), Ingonish Campground and Highland Links Golf Course.</p>
<p>Trail Access</p>	<p>Follow road to Keltic Lodge just past eastern entrance to park. Follow road to parking lot at end where trailhead sign is visible. Trail can be hiked in an “out and back” fashion. For a longer hike, take the path on the north side of the peninsula on the return. At the end of this loop, veer left to get back to the stairs leading to the parking lot. A right turn will take you back to Keltic Lodge.</p>	<p>Park Entry Permits</p>	<p><i>Are required for all park use including trails.</i></p>
<p>Trail Condition</p>	<p><i>Overall good condition.</i> Trail is dry and boardwalks cover some of the more unstable wet areas.</p>	<p>Safety</p>	<p><i>Some short, steep climbs – average fitness level required</i> <i>Bears, Moose and Coyote</i> can be dangerous-keep your distance; if necessary, leave the area. Do not discard food scraps. <i>Carry water</i> – do not drink from lakes or streams. <i>High Cliffs:</i> Stay well back from the edge. Keep young children close. <i>Weather can change rapidly</i> – be prepared for hot OR cool weather and sudden rain. High winds frequent this area. <i>Insects:</i> Black flies and mosquitoes, especially at dusk and when there is no wind.</p>

POINTS OF INTEREST

<p>Trail Name</p>	<p>Micmac people named the peninsula Genanisg – “the remarkable place”. Later the area was called “Niganis” or “Niganishe” meaning “comrades”, referring to the two bays separated by the headland. It is believed that the peninsula is called Middle Head because it is in the middle between South and North Bay Ingonish.</p>	<p>Historical continued</p>	<p>In the early 1900’s, six families from Ingonish Centre built fish shacks on Middle Head (about 1/3 of the way along the trail) and spent the summer fishing the waters. A fish plant located in the same clearing at one time employed 110 men. Settlers carved drawings of houses, schooners and dories on the “old slate rock”. These petroglyphs are still visible along the Middle Head Trail. Cape Breton Highlands National Park was established in 1936 and in 1937-38, the Corson Estate and Middle Head became part of the park. Gateposts still stand near the trailhead.</p>
<p>Historical</p>	<p>Middle Head was once part of the estate of Henry Corson, who built here in 1891 to give his invalid wife a home in a healthful invigorating climate. He kept cattle and horses and planted exotic flowers and an orchard. The gateposts of the Corson house still stand near the trailhead.</p>		



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POINTS OF INTEREST

Other	Seabirds nest on the rocks at the tip of Middle Head. There was once a nesting colony of Arctic and Common Terns here, but since 1990 they suffered increasing competition from gulls and are no longer present. Various other seabirds are common today and can be seen from shore (see Fauna section).	Other continued	The coastal habitats in this area are adapted to extreme natural conditions such as high winds, waves and salt spray. They are, however, still susceptible to human impact such as pollution and trampling. Visitors to this unique area are reminded to stay on the trail to minimize damage to fragile coastal plants, especially at the tip of the headland on the coastal barrens.
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NATURAL FEATURES

Landform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevations between 30-165 ft. (10 - 50m) • Peninsula is underlain by rocks of the Precambrian Era covered with compacted glacial material. The rocky coastal headland is composed of granite, diorite and gabbro. Some areas of the Middle Head Peninsula consist of gypsum and sandstone. • The headland has been carved by glaciers and by the sea for millions of years to form the narrow peninsula that exists today. The harder igneous rocks that currently underlay the peninsula were once surrounded by softer sedimentary material that eroded to form North Bay and South Bay. 	Forest and Plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle Head is located in the Acadian forest region of the Park, although the surrounding ocean greatly influences the vegetation. • Balsam fir and white spruce are the dominant tree species in exposed areas on Middle Head with some Acadian forest species (Sugar maple, striped maple, birch) inland on deeper soils. • The salt spray zone is a unique microclimate phenomena of the coastal zone. Here, white spruce trees in open, exposed locations exhibit the “krummholz effect”. “Krummholz”, from the German word “twisted wood”, refers to the stunted, misshapen form of trees at locations of great environmental stress, such as high wind. Trees here are typically much older than their height would dictate. • Salt-tolerant plants such as common and creeping juniper, black crowberry, bayberry and harebell are typical coastal plants that grow on coastal barrens and in rocky areas near the shore. • Old fields on the peninsula support typical flora – poverty grass, sheep fescue, cow vetch, knapweed, plantain, and wild strawberries. • In the intertidal zone, various marine algae cover the rocks including Irish moss, rock weed, knotted wrack, sea lettuce and kelp.
Fauna	<p><i>Animals:</i> Moose, bobcat, red squirrel, eastern chipmunk, meadow vole. Birds: Ruffed grouse, dark-eyed junco, black guillemot, double-crested cormorant, herring gull, greater black-backed gull, gannets, common eider, red breasted merganser, common goldeneye, white-winged scoter.</p> <p><i>Reptiles and Amphibians:</i> Ringneck snake</p> <p><i>Fish:</i> Haddock, herring, mackerel (in bays)</p> <p><i>Marine Invertebrates:</i> Periwinkles, dogwhelks, barnacles, rock crabs and sea urchins in intertidal zone and tide pools. Lobster live on rocky ocean bottom.</p> <p><i>Marine Mammals:</i> Pilot, fin, minke and humpback whales as well as harbour and grey seals can sometimes be seen from the headland.</p> <p><i>Rare and uncommon species:</i> A leatherback sea turtle (rare, endangered) was observed in August 2004 swimming near shore.</p>		