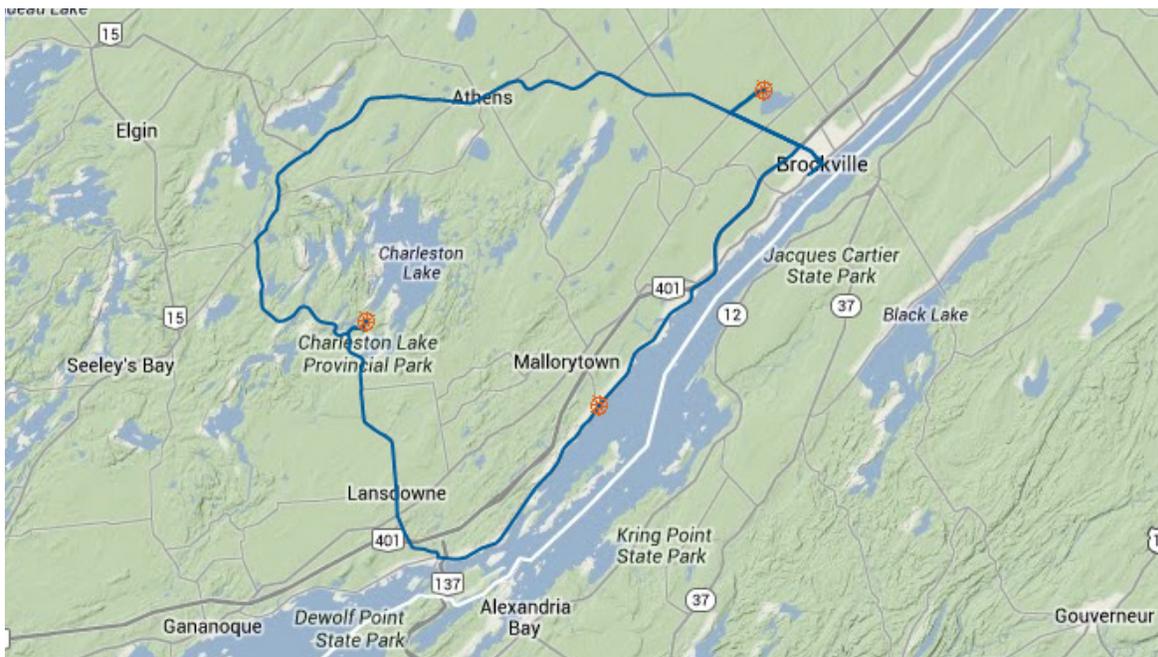




FAB EXPERIENCES

Eastern Ontario, Canada

Five Forest Tour



The Frontenac Arch, especially at this midway region between the Canadian Shield and Adirondack Mountains, has extremely rich natural environments and biodiversity. It was an ideal candidate for a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

It's a classic case of "location, location, location". The Frontenac Arch connects the boreal forest of the Canadian Shield to the Appalachian forests of the Adirondack and Appalachian Mountains. And here at the centre of the Frontenac Arch, the St. Lawrence Valley links the forests of the Great Lakes and Atlantic Coast. It's an intersection of major natural migration routes, linking those forest regions.

Forest types reflect their geology and climate. The Frontenac Arch and the river valley are corridors that link and intermingle them. The geological character of this landscape and the moderating effect of Lake Ontario created the niches and opportunities for the plants and animals more normally found in other geographies to coexist.

Explore this subtle mix of forests and see the biodiversity first hand. Brockville sits at the eastern edge of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere, and this tour will take you from sandstone plains, to the rugged core of the Frontenac Arch. Wear your hiking shoes; bring along field guides and binoculars if you have them.

Tour from the FAB Brockville Gateway

fabbrockville.ca

1. Mac Johnson Wildlife Area

Lat: 44.630200
Long: -75.730280

To get a picture of forest communities at the east edge of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere, a short excursion north of town is helpful. This will take you onto the sandstone plain to the east of the granites of the Frontenac Arch. The Mac Johnson Wildlife Area is the public space to explore. The broad marsh and the terrain that surrounds it are fairly flat land. Notice that there are no rock ridges, outcrops or cliff faces. There are few pine trees in the woodlands, and the woodlands are scattered, and not extensive.

Driving Directions: To arrive at the Mac Johnson Wildlife Area, drive north on Cnty. Rd. 29, 6.2 km. to Tincap, turn right at lights to Debruge Rd., 2 km. to conservation area entrance and parking.

From the Mac Johnson Wildlife Area return towards Brockville on Cnty. Rd. 29 for 4.6 km.; exit right onto Hwy. 401 west; drive 11.7 km., take Exit 685 left off Hwy. 401 to Thousand Islands Parkway; drive west 4.2 km. on Parkway to arrive at Jones Creek trail, opposite Browns Bay Park, north side, and parking.

Notes:

Along the route...

On the drive westward from Brockville, the Highway 401 to the beginning of the Thousand Islands Parkway is generally flat and straight, but past the Parkway exit quickly becomes more abrupt. Watch as the highway rock cuts appear. The first ones are layered, beige rock, and then suddenly one km. past the Parkway exit become massive faces of pink granite – a dramatic change in geology, and a sudden change in habitat types.

Notes:

Along the route...

**Jones Creek Trail:
Thousand Islands
National Park**

On the north side of the Thousand Islands Parkway, across from Brown's Bay Park, turn into the small parking lot and trailhead for the Jones Creek trail. This is one of the best wildlife viewing trails in the region, if you happen upon it on a morning before many others arrive.

An interpretive sign near the parking area gives insight into what you'll see, and shows the complexity of the routes.

A feature of the trail is a floating boardwalk and bridge across Jones Creek. This walk, whatever length of loop you choose (see the trails network at frontenacarchbiosphere.ca/explore to download maps), will introduce you to many habitats of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere. In the marsh area alone, you will see several wetland types – deep water cattail marsh, sedge and reed mats, wild rice stands, swamp edges and their inhabitants of muskrats, beaver, mink, otter, herons, bitterns, swamp sparrows, marsh wrens, ducks, rails to name just a few.

Driving Directions: From Jones Creek trail, continue west on Thousand Islands Parkway 5 km., just past intersection with Cnty. Rd. 5, to Thousand Islands National Park, on left, and parking.

Notes:

**2. Thousand Islands
National Park**

Lat: 44.283300
Long: -75.858718

There is a visitor centre on the south side of the Thousand Islands Parkway at Mallorytown Landing. The staff and exhibits at the centre are a great resource to learn firsthand about the ecology of the region. On the north side of the Parkway, there is a walking trail loop through the woodlands that lets you explore the quickly changing forest habitats.

There are several key factors in the diversity of life in this region. Among these are bedrock types, variations in terrain such as degree of the slope and which way the slope faces, type of soils over the bedrock, and the amount of moderation by the St. Lawrence, Lake Ontario and the inland lakes. there is a lot to this: see a full story at [frontenacarchbiosphere/explore](http://frontenacarchbiosphere.ca/explore)

You can feel as well as see the effect of some of these factors, especially related to topography. On sunny days, south-facing slopes are considerably warmer and drier than the opposite north-facing slopes. The effect is reflected in the species of trees and understory plants.

Continued on next page

Explore more at: frontenacarchbiosphere.ca

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previous page

Driving Directions: First, drive west 3.5 km. to Narrows Lane intersection with Thousand Islands Parkway, for observation as “Along the Way”, below. Then, continue 11.2 km. to intersection with Reynolds Rd./Cnty. Rd. 3, at Frontenac Arch Biosphere office (again see “Along the Way”, below). Turn right onto Cnty. Rd. 3/Reynolds Rd.; drive north for 16.9 km., passing through Lansdowne and Outlet; turn right onto Woodvale Rd.; drive 1.2 Km., turn left onto Charleston Lake Rd. to park entrance.

Notes:

Along the route...

About 3.5 km. west of Mallorytown Landing along the Thousand Islands Parkway is a marsh that has grown in to become a broad, wet meadow. In that meadow, at roadside, are groves of birch trees – with a distinctive conical, wire-brush shape. These are wire birch, more common in the coastal forests to the east, and at the western range limits here.

A little farther along, 14.7 km. west of the Landing and at the corner of Reynolds Rd. where you turn north on this tour, is the office of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere. At the north side of the small parking lot, there are two pine trees standing next to each other. One is lacy, tall and elegant – a white pine. The other is coarse and rugged looking – a pitch pine. The white pine is very typical of the forests of the Great Lakes region, and at the centre of its normal range here. The pitch pine is the common pine of the New Jersey Pine Barrens, and is part of a very localized outlier population, at the very northern limits of range.

As you drove along the Parkway, you saw many islands – another factor in biodiversity here. The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River are a barrier to long-term plant and animal migration and dispersal. However, the islands, tightly clustered in many places, help reduce that barrier, forming stepping-stones of sorts.

Notes:

Explore more at: frontenacarchbiosphere.ca

3. Charleston Lake Provincial Park

Lat: 44.501830
Long: -76.041420

Charleston Lake Provincial Park lies cradled in the granite geology of the Frontenac Arch. There is an interpretive centre in the park, and the staff and exhibits are resources to help you really separate the forest from the trees. Explore the many paths or by canoe (rentals available). It's plainly obvious that the forest has changed from the leafy green of hardwood forests around Brockville to the mix of evergreens and hardwoods. Valleys of rich forests are interrupted by treeless granite ridges, flanked by savannahs of red and white oaks, pitch pine, red pine and white pine with mats of sedges and mosses, and pockets of blueberries and huckleberries. North-facing slopes are often flanked with hemlock stands, moose maple and elderberries, cool and quiet.

Driving Directions: From Charleston Lake Provincial Park, follow Charleston Lake Rd. and Woodvale Rd. back to Cnty. Rd. 3; turn right; drive north 11.2 km. to intersection with Vnty. Rd. 33, turn right, drive 6.8 km. to intersection with Cnty. Rd. 42, turn right; drive 20.9 km., through village of Athens, to Cnty. Rd. 29, turn right; drive 15.1 km. to downtown Brockville.

Notes:

Along the route...

There is much more to explore – and you might take another day to travel on using the High Points tour as a guide. But given the amount of walking today, this route returns to Brockville by going north to then follow a route southeastward along the edge of the Frontenac Arch.

Once past Athens, the roads that were forced into twisting turns by the lay of the land now run much straighter across the lowland. Looking to your left, the land visibly flattens out, while off to the right, are the hills and valleys that mark the terrain of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere. The forest again becomes less dominated by evergreens, and is more leafy and deciduous all the way to Brockville.

Notes:

Explore more at: frontenacarchbiosphere.ca