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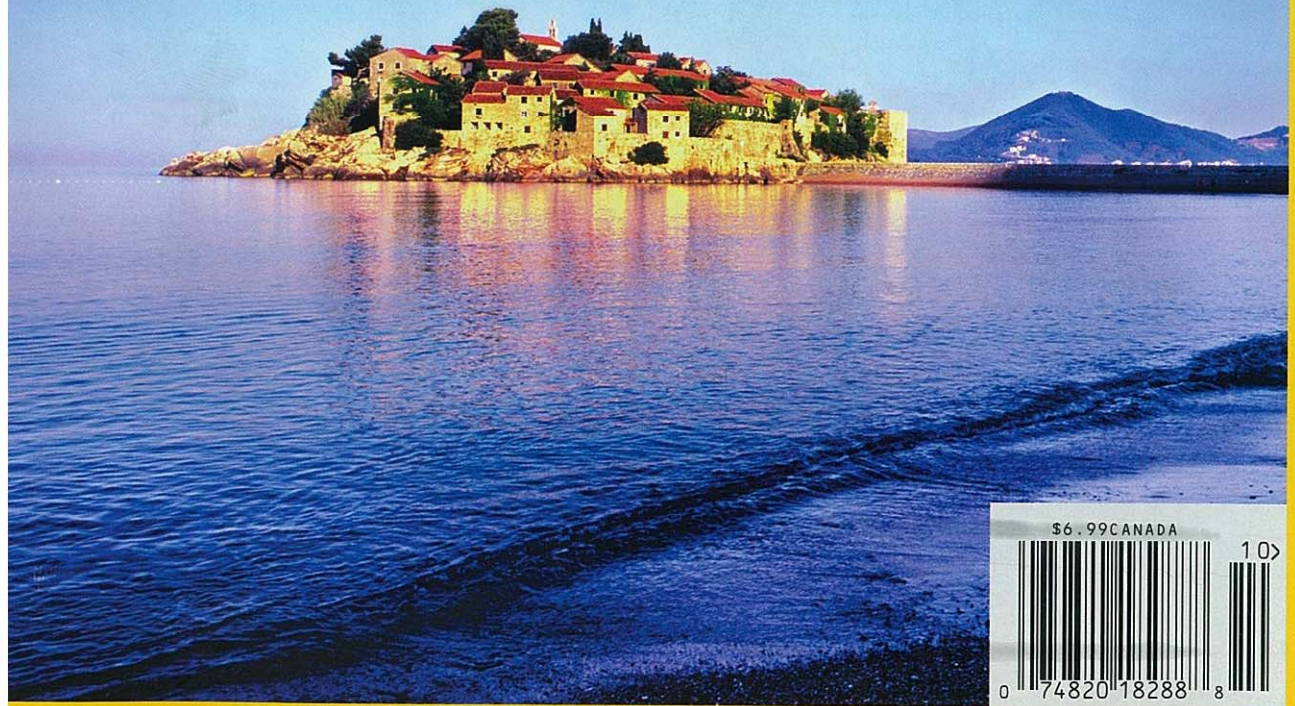
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All Travel, All the Time
October 2009

PLACES *of a* LIFETIME

THE WORLD'S GREATEST DESTINATIONS, PART II
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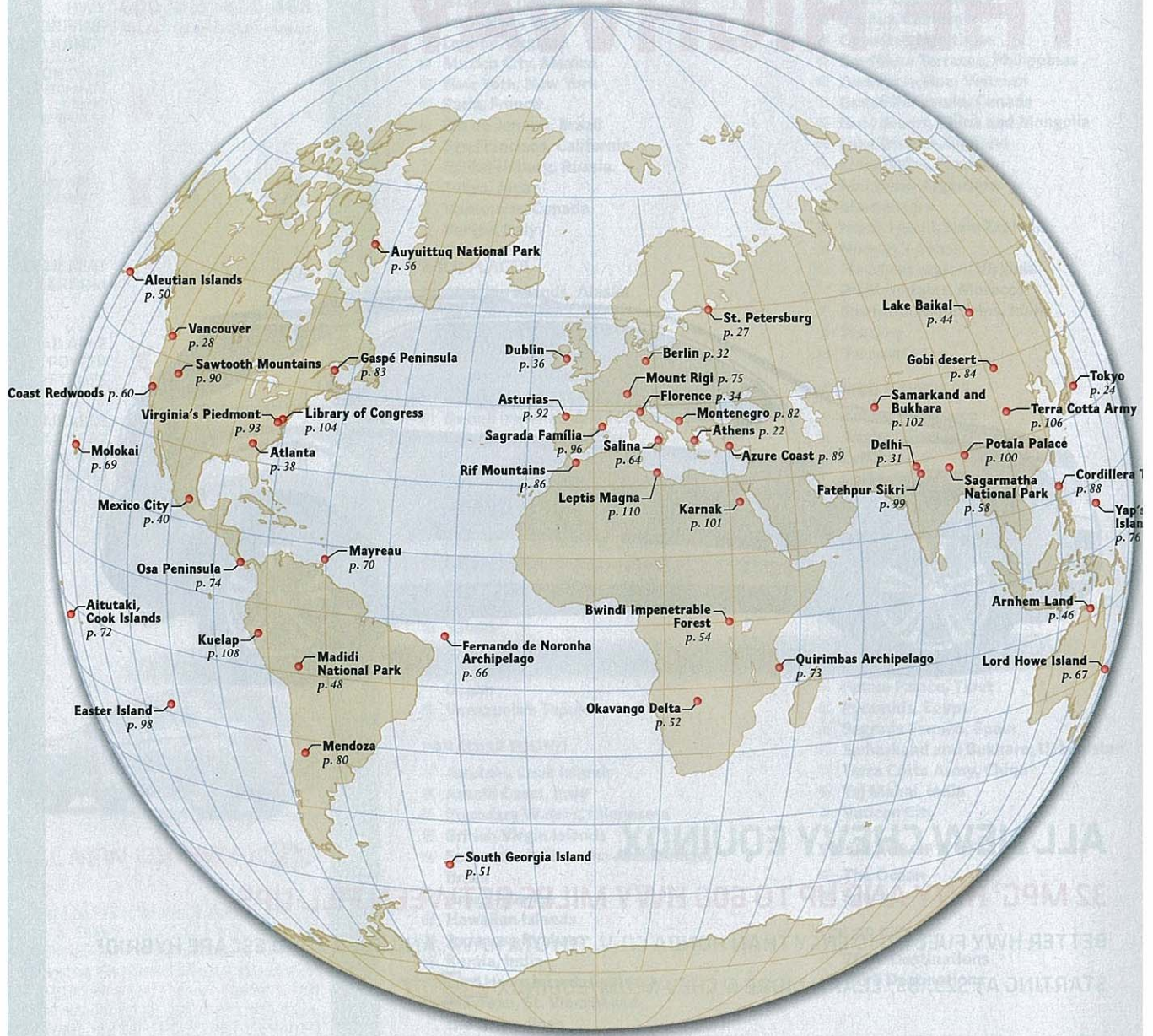
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THE WORLD'S GREATEST DESTINATIONS, PART II



OUR MISSION NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER reports on destinations of distinction and character, and we support efforts to keep them that way—believing that to enhance an authentic “sense of place” will benefit both travelers and the locations they visit.

Grand Isolation

Embraced by the vast Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada's Gaspé Peninsula—or “land's end” in native Micmac—treasures its abundant nature and small-town charm. BY KEVIN PARENT

I live in Miguasha, a small fishing village in the **Gaspé Peninsula** at the eastern tip of Québec. From my bedroom window I can see across the Bay of Chaleur, considered by some one of the most alluring bays in the world, and into the forested hills of the Chic-Choc Mountains.

Surrounded by the Gulf of St. Lawrence (actually a semi-enclosed sea), the Gaspé is geographically isolated. Its “back in the day” village life draws Québécois film crews as well as travelers seeking natural landscapes. Fish and forests are the peninsula's main resources, but the soul of the Gaspé is its people. Most are of French extraction, with Scottish, Irish, and English—as well as native Micmac—adding to the mixture. Culture and tradition are important here. We gather to drink, practice slap shots at the local ice rink, and build bonfires on the beach on summer nights.

Music, starting with Irish Catholic church choirs and kitchen jam sessions, is part of the fabric of life on the peninsula. In Carleton-sur-Mer, a seaside resort on the south shore, for example, the music offerings range from the local marina's jazz happy hour to the Naufrageur Brewery's traditional music scene, to “le Bateau,” a 374-foot-long boat turned

bar that features rock-and-roll music and dancing.

The people here—artists, musicians, writers—are sociable, yet we also enjoy our alone time. We will sail across the bay to secluded Heron Island and walk along the shore, play an uncrowded golf course in Carleton, or even better, fly-fish one of the peninsula's top salmon rivers. Years ago, I landed a 31-pound Atlantic salmon on a small July stonefly at Angus Pool on the Matapedia River.

The pleasures of the Gaspé Peninsula's cultured, rural life seem endless. Visit Percé to admire the red cliffs, eat fresh lobster, and walk up Percé Rock—a limestone butte rising from the sea—at low tide. Attend a play or concert in L'Anse-à-Beaufils. Hunt for fish fossils at Miguasha National Park, a World Heritage site. Finally, do not leave the Gaspé with-

out taking a drive on Highway 132. It runs along a scenic coast where nothing comes between you and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, that body of water that makes all of this grand isolation possible.

Singer-songwriter Kevin Parent grew up in the French-speaking area of the Bay of Chaleur on the Gaspé Peninsula. In 2007 he released his first English album, Fangless Wolf Facing Winter.



VITAL STATS Location:

On the eastern tip of Quebec, Canada, just north of New Brunswick

▪ **Population:** 135,000

▪ **Climate:** Average summer temp is 68°F; average winter temp is 23°F

▪ **Activities:**

Salmon and deep-sea fishing, hiking, kayaking, visiting local farms

▪ **Notable:** French explorer Jacques Cartier mapped and claimed Gaspé Bay for French King Francis I in 1534; the Parc National de L'Île-Bonaventure-et-du-Rocher-Percé protects one of the largest bird sanctuaries in the world; the International Appalachian Trail runs along the Gaspé's Chic-Choc Mountains and ends at the lighthouse on Cap-Gaspé.

Percé Rock rises from the Gulf of St. Lawrence just off the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula. Life-size concrete sculptures by Marcel Gagnon (inset) appear to move with the tides in Sainte Flavie, a gateway to the peninsula.

