

Stamps promote World Heritage sites

CHARLES J.G. VERGE

Canada is home to 14 locations on the list of World Heritage sites, including the newly listed Rideau Canal. Ten of these sites have appeared on Canadian stamps, some more than once.

On June 28, 2007, the United Nation's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) added the Rideau Canal to its Canadian segment of the World Heritage list. Benefits from being on the list include access to a World Heritage Fund of U.S. \$4.26 million to assist in identifying, preserving and promoting World Heritage sites; implementation of a comprehensive management plan that provides adequate preservation measures and monitoring mechanisms; and an increase in public awareness of the site and of its outstanding values, thus also increasing tourist activities at the site.

An additional benefit of being on the list is that many of these sites appear on postage stamps of the country in which they are located, as well as on United Nations stamps and some-

times on stamps of other countries.

Two Canadian sites appeared on UNESCO's first World Heritage list, published in 1978: Nahanni National Park Reserve, Northwest Territory; and L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site, Newfoundland.

Nahanni became the first site in the world to be granted World Heritage status. A stamp showing a segment of the South Nahanni River (Scott 1321, Figure 1) was issued in 1991 as part of a series of stamps celebrating historic waterways.

Prospectors began searching the South Nahanni River for gold more than a century ago. They found little, but they encountered some of the

most varied and spectacular environment imaginable, including towering mountains and tundra plains, wetlands and sand dunes, badlands and lush forests, grizzly bears and trumpeter swans. In addition, there are hot springs and complex cave formations in the preserve — some lined with ice crystals, others with stalagmites and stalactites.

Within the preserve's boundaries are Virginia Falls, which are twice the height of Niagara Falls. There are no roads or human communities. This is a wilderness largely unmodified by humans, with running water the only constant agent of change.

The only authenticated Viking set-



Figure 1. The South Nahanni River is shown on this 40¢ stamp (Scott 1321) issued in 1991 in a set featuring Canadian rivers.



Figure 2. L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site, the only authenticated Viking settlement in North America, is shown on the top left stamp in this Millennium souvenir sheet showing "Canada's cultural fabric." The World Heritage Site designation is noted in the marginal text.



Figure 3. Kluane National Park is shown on this 1979 \$2 definitive stamp (Scott 727).

tlement in North America was also named to the list in 1978. L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site in Newfoundland was honored on one of the Millennium stamps issued in 2000 (Scott 1827a, Figure 2). This is the only Canadian World Heritage site that is specifically identified as such on a Canadian stamp's selvage.

The remains of the 1,000-year-old Viking colony — rediscovered in 1960 by the Norwegian team of Helge Ingstad and Anne Stine Ingstad following Viking sagas recorded in medieval Icelandic manuscripts — marks the site of the first known European settlement in North America.

Around 985, sailors aboard an Icelandic trading ship that was blown off course en route to Greenland were the first to report new lands to the west. The Vikings built three timber-and-sod log houses and five smaller buildings on the site.

In the years following, Leif Erikson, members of his family and a group of colonists visited the camp and ventured as far south as New Brunswick. Conflict with Aboriginal people apparently forced them to withdraw from the area, and they returned to Greenland within a de-

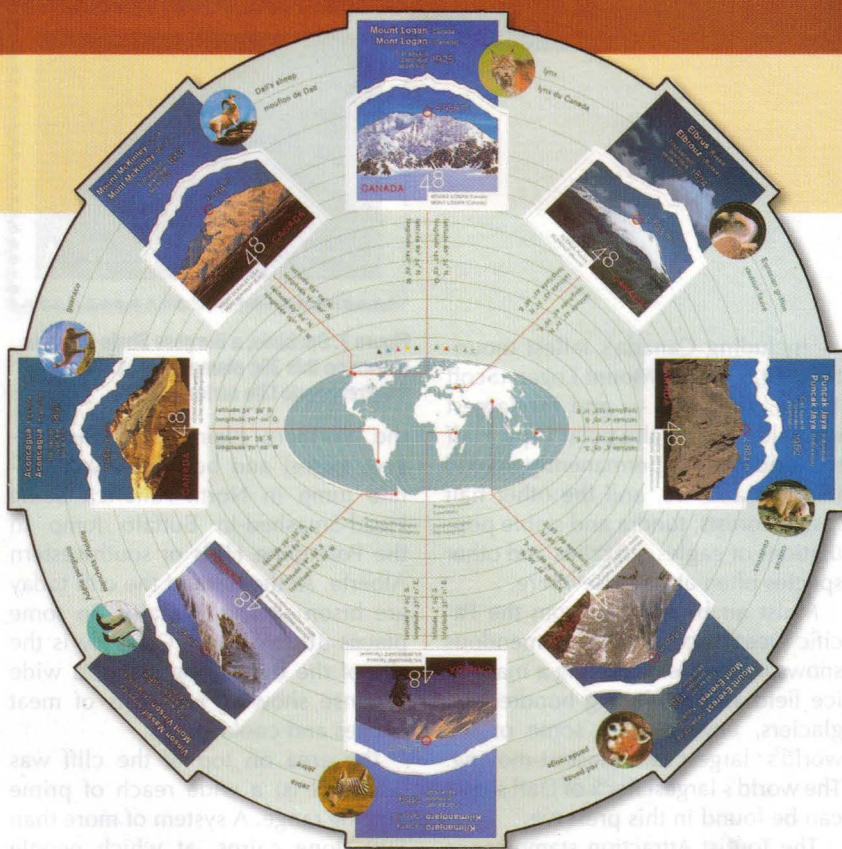


Figure 4. Mount Logan in Canada is shown on the top stamp of this souvenir sheet (Scott 1960a) issued in 2002 to pay tribute to the International Year of Mountains.

cade. Excavation by the Ingstads and, later, by Parks Canada, unearthed the remains of eight buildings and hundreds of Viking artifacts, mostly of wood but also of iron, stone, bronze and bone.

Kluane National Park and Reserve in the Yukon and British Columbia's Tatshenshini-Alsek Park (managed in cooperation with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations) are the Canadian components of a vast unbroken ecological unit that covers

37,452 square miles.

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Glacier Bay National Park, both in Alaska, complete the first binational entry on the World Heritage list. They were linked together as one World Heritage site in 1979, with the Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park being added in 1994.

Kluane is shown on a \$2 definitive stamp issued in 1979 (Scott 727, Figure 3). Within this preserve are most of the tallest peaks in North America

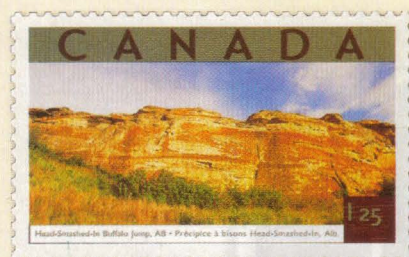


Figure 5. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in southwestern Alberta is pictured on this 2007 \$1.25 stamp from the Tourist Attractions series. The historical site had been added to the UNESCO list 20 years earlier.



Figure 6. Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage site is featured on these four stamps from Canada Post. The site was designated in 1984.



Figure 7. Opabinia, a Burgess Shale fossil, is shown on this 39¢ stamp (Scott 1282) from the Prehistoric Life series of 1990.

— including Canada's tallest mountain, 19,551-foot Mount Logan (Scott 1960a, Figure 4) — and the largest ice fields outside the polar caps. Half the land mass is permanently draped in snow and ice, and the other half fosters forests, tundra and stable populations of eagles, grizzlies and other species often at risk elsewhere.

Moist air blowing in from the Pacific Ocean accounts for tremendous snows in the area, creating a massive ice field and producing hundreds of glaciers, among them some of the world's largest and fastest-moving. The world's largest flock of Dall sheep can be found in this preserve.

The Tourist Attraction stamp series of 2002 includes one stamp (Scott 1953c, Figure 5) for Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in Alberta. This historical site was added to the UNESCO list in 1981.

For thousands of years, bison provided the Aboriginal peoples of North America's Great Plains with many of life's requirements: meat for food; hides for clothing and shelter; sinew, bone and horn for tools; and dung for fires. The principal means of killing large numbers of bison was the buffalo jump. Herds were stampeded over cliffs and butchered at the bottom.

Buffalo jumps were common on

the Northern Plains, with the biggest, oldest and best-preserved buffalo jump in North America being Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in the Porcupine Hills of southwestern Alberta. At the base of the cliff today are bison skeletal remains, in some places 36 feet deep. Close by is the site of the butchering camp, a wide expanse showing remnants of meat caches and cooking pits.

The area on top of the cliff was (and still is) a wide reach of prime grazing range. A system of more than 500 stone cairns, at which people built fires or waved blankets, begins six miles west of the cliff. The cairns helped direct the bison into drive lanes approaching the precipice.

The Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks (Alberta) World Heritage site was designated in 1984 and enlarged in 1990 to include the Burgess Shale. Four stamps, shown in Figure 6, have been issued for these parks. One stamp was issued in 1985 for the centennial of Banff National Park (Scott 936). The second stamp was released in 1993 for Mount Robson Provincial Park (Scott 1476), one of three British Columbia provincial parks in the

preserve, the others being Mount Assiniboine and Hamber.

The third stamp (Scott 1854c) was issued in 2000 showing Peyto Lake, which is part of the Fresh Waters. A fourth was issued July 20, 2007 (not yet listed by Scott) for the centenary of Jasper National Park. Opabinia, a Burgess Shale fossil, was featured on a 39¢ stamp in the Canada Post Prehistoric Life series in 1990 (Scott 1282, Figure 7).

Some of the best-known scenery on Earth is found in the seven parks that form the Canadian Rocky Mountains Parks Preserve. More than nine million people visit them every year.

There are four national parks in the ensemble — Banff, Jasper, Yoho and Kootenay — and the three previously mentioned British Columbia provincial parks. In 1885, Banff became Canada's first park preserve, as well as being the birthplace of Canada's national park system.

Old town Quebec City, Quebec, became the first Canadian World Heritage site to encompass areas of a living, breathing city. Canada has issued more than a dozen stamps celebrating Quebec City and the surrounding area. Only the \$2 definitive stamp issued in 1973 shows some of Quebec City's old town (Scott 601,



Figure 8. This 1973 \$2 stamp (Scott 601) shows Quebec City's old town. It is the only stamp to show the city's historic district.



Figure 9. Western Brook Pond in Gros Morne National Park is shown on this stamp from the Fresh Water series of 2000.



Figure 10. Waterton Glacier International Peace Park became a World Heritage site in 1995. The park is also pictured on the 55¢ stamp shown in Figure 6 along with Peyto Lake.

Figure 8).

Nearly half of the buildings in the historic district of Old Quebec were built before 1850. Some date back to the era of New France (1608-1763), including two to within a few years of the founding of the city by Samuel de Champlain in 1608.

Champlain built his original settlement on the shore of the St. Lawrence River, near the site of the former Iroquois village of Stadacona, at the foot of a great promontory called Cap Diamant. A stamp commemorating the

400th anniversary of this event will be issued by Canada Post in 2008.

Although the settlement has grown into a modern city, the Historic District, covering 334 acres (about 5 percent of the city total), remains among the best preserved of such areas in North America. Moreover, Quebec is unique among cities on the continent in having retained almost all its fortifications, and, as such, is the only walled city in North America.

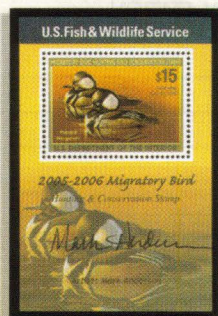
Gros Morne National Park in Newfoundland was listed as a World

Heritage site in 1987. In 2000, another stamp in the Fresh Water series depicted Western Brook Pond (Scott 1855a, Figure 9) from Gros Morne National Park. The scenery at Gros Morne ranks among the most spectacular in eastern Canada, with its sharp ridges and huge cliffs, coastal bogs and highland tundra, dramatic ocean inlets and lakes.

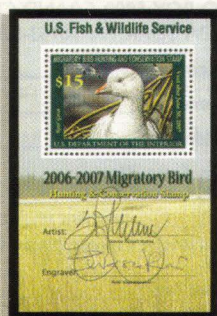
Oddly enough, this exceptional natural beauty is not the reason that the park has a spot on the World Heritage list. The park received the

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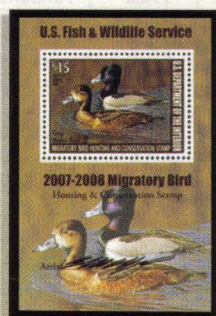
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honor for its remarkable geology. Gros Morne is considered a textbook illustration of plate tectonics, the theory that suggests continent-size plates of the Earth's crust have collided and separated repeatedly over geological time, opening and closing oceans between them.

In 1995, two more Canadian Heritage sites were named. The first is the Waterton Glacier International Peace Park located across the border between Alberta and the United States. Parts of this site were shown in 1982 when the park itself was honored on \$1.50 definitive stamp (Scott 935); in 2000, when Cameron Lake was portrayed on a stamp in the Fresh Water series (Scott 1854c); and in 2005 (Scott 2105), as part of

the Biosphere Reserves joint issue with Ireland. The stamps are shown in Figure 10, except for Scott 1854c, which is shown in Figure 6.

In 1931, the Rotary clubs of Alberta and Montana proposed uniting Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta and Glacier National Park in Montana as the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, the first such park in the world. The union of

the two parks was intended not just to promote peace and goodwill but also to underscore the international nature of wilderness and the cooperation required to protect it.

Within the two parks, which include 203 square miles of Waterton Lakes National Park and 1,564 square miles of Glacier National Park, nature has provided much that is worthy of protection. An Aboriginal presence in the region goes back 12,000 years, and places in both parks hold deep significance for the Blackfoot Confederacy.

The second site listed in 1995 is Old Town Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. It was the second Canadian city to be designated a World Heritage site. The same year, Canada issued a sin-

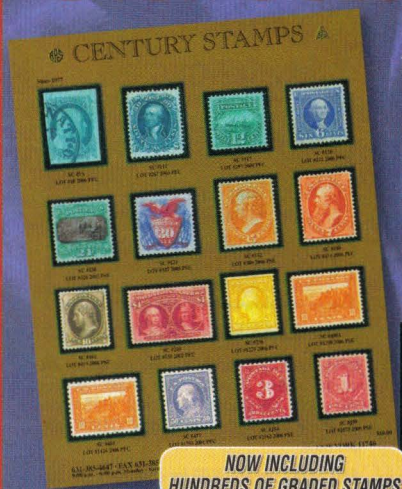


Figure 11. Canada issued a single domestic-rate stamp in 1995 for the centennial of the Lunenburg Academy (Scott 1558).

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gle domestic-rate stamp for the centennial of the Lunenburg Academy (Scott 1558, Figure 11).

Old Town Lunenburg, where all streets are straight and all corners square, is the best surviving example of a British colonial policy of creating new settlements by imposing a predesigned "model town" plan on whatever tract of wilderness the British wished to colonize. At least 21 North American settlements, from Cornwall and Niagara-on-the-Lake in Ontario to Savannah, Georgia, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, benefited from this policy. None has survived in such pristine condition as the town of Lunenburg.

The London-based Board of Trade and Plantations developed the plans

without regard to local topography, which is why Lunenburg's streets are never less than straight but sometimes incredibly steep. The settlement was created in June 1753 as a home for 1,453 mostly German-speaking Protestant German, Swiss and Montbéliardian French colonists, with each family receiving one town lot. There

are some 400 major buildings within the old town, 70 percent of them from the 18th and 19th centuries, almost all of them in colorful painted wood.

This year it was the Rideau Canal's turn to become a World Heritage site. Two stamps have been issued for the canal, both in the same Historic

Figure 12. The Rideau Canal in Ottawa is shown on these stamps in the 1998 Canals of Canada stamp set. The canal became a World Heritage site in 2007.



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Figure 13. Fort Henry is shown on this Canada Day 1983 stamp (Scott 983).

Canals of Canada set issued in 1998. The domestic-rate stamps, shown in Figure 12, show the canal in winter (Scott 1732) and in summer (Scott 1728).

The Rideau Canal World Heritage Site designation also includes Fort Henry and the Kingston fortifications. Fort Henry is pictured on the Canada Day stamp issued in 1983 (Scott 983, Figure 13).

The system, a monumental early 19th-century canal with 47 locks, covers 122 miles of the Rideau and Cataraqui rivers, from Ottawa south to Kingston Harbor on Lake Ontario. The canal was built primarily for strategic military purposes at a time when Great Britain and the United States vied for control of the region.

The system also features an ensemble of fortifications.

Rideau Canal is the only canal dating from the great North American canal-building era of the early 19th century to remain operational along its original line with most of its original structures intact. The canal was protected by the construction of six blockhouses and a fort. Defensible lockmaster's houses were later added at several lock stations, and between 1846 and 1848, four Martello towers were constructed to strengthen the fortifications at Kingston Harbor.

Four Canadian World Heritage sites have yet to appear on Canadian stamps. They are: Dinosaur Pro-

vincial Park, Alberta (designated in 1979); SGang Gwaay, British Columbia (1981); Wood Buffalo National Park, Northwest Territory (1983); and Miquasha Park, Quebec (1999).

Perhaps these parks, and another already-honored site, will be shown on definitive domestic-rate stamps in the Flag Over Sites series that has been ongoing since 1989 and is similar in concept to the "Flag Over" series issued by the United States Postal Service.

Canada Post now designates each set in this Flag series with a specific theme — the 2008 stamps being named "Flags Over Lighthouses." Perhaps, in the not too distant future, Canada Post will issue "Flags Over World Heritage Sites" stamps. ■

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