

# Geoheritage in Nova Scotia: Celebrating our Deepest Roots

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Nova Scotia has long been recognized for its rich and diverse geology, a heritage that defines our landscape, is reflected in our industrial history, and which has influenced some of the greatest ideas that have shaped human understanding of our place in the history of life. The importance of recognizing our shared geological heritage on Earth, however, is a comparatively recent concept. *Geoheritage* can be defined succinctly as geological features that inform humanity of its relationship with the Earth (Calder and DeMont, 2010). Relevance to humanity is an implicit, core value of geoheritage. *Geotourism* refers to the marketing of visitation to geoheritage sites and its economic benefits.

Nova Scotia has potential to celebrate a particularly rich geological heritage, commemorated at levels ranging from interpretive signage at scenic vantage points to the ultimate designation of UNESCO World Heritage. This full spectrum of formal recognition is important in that it makes geoheritage accessible and relevant both locally and globally. Recognition of a site's value and interest brings increased public awareness and attention. Such attention may be a catalyst for geotourism and economic development, which is usually supported by local communities, but it can also bring with it issues of preserving a site's integrity. Not all sites are suited to open visitation: unsafe access, vulnerability to harm by unsupervised collecting, and even obscure or complex scientific relevance can render a site unsuitable as a geotourism destination.

The recognition of our collective geoheritage is increasingly important as society faces a pressing need to understand our place on the Earth. While the tangible benefits of geotourism have value in their own right, the importance of geoheritage reaches deeper. Nova Scotia, due to its rich heritage of scientific exploration, its varied geology, and its dramatic coastline, has both an opportunity and responsibility to celebrate that heritage across the full range of geoheritage recognition. Identifying the legacy of the Earth's history across the province is the first step in realizing this opportunity.

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