

Into the Tobetic

A Guide for Planning Wilderness
Travel in Tobetic Wilderness Area

This guide gives basic information for planning a wilderness trip in Tobetic Wilderness Area. It describes a range of activities and features helpful advice on wilderness trip planning, safety, and ethics. Please remember, it is up to you to fully prepare before you venture into Tobetic Wilderness Area. Before you go, be sure to consult appropriate maps and guidebooks, or local guides and outfitters.

Tobetic Wilderness Area

Protected under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act, Tobetic Wilderness Area is an important natural area in Nova Scotia and is the largest wild region in the Maritimes. It spans more than 104 000 hectares (257,000 acres) in southwestern Nova Scotia, including parts of Annapolis, Digby, Yarmouth, Shelburne, and Queens counties.

Due to its size and variety, Tobetic Wilderness Area protects numerous habitats, species, and natural processes. It also helps maintain an important part of our wilderness heritage and provides outstanding wilderness recreation opportunities. The wilderness area contains rugged wild lands and unique glacial land forms. Its headwater lakes and streams and large wetlands are largely undisturbed. Pockets of rich old-growth forests and expanses of fire ferns provide unique and significant wildlife habitat.

The Tobetic region rests on ancient bedrock that dates to a time 370 million years ago. The northern part of the wilderness area includes part of the South Mountain Batholith, a large granite deposit that stretches in a broad arc from the southwestern interior to the Chebucto peninsula and the Atlantic coast. The southern portion of the wilderness area lies atop bedrock of slates and greywackes, providing richer soils for vegetation.

Glaciation has greatly influenced the landscapes of southwestern Nova Scotia. Repeated ice flow and retreat scoured much of the province, most recently during the Wisconsin glaciation, which ended about 10,000 years ago. This action left behind patches of exposed bedrock amid larger regions of stony till. In the wilderness area, there are outstanding examples of glacial land forms such as outwash plains, eskers, kames, drumlins, and moraine ridges. Especially obvious are the massive boulders, known as erratics, found scattered throughout the forests and lakes.



Canoeing

Southwestern Nova Scotia is the premiere wilderness canoeing destination in the province. Tobetic Wilderness Area features remote waterways throughout the interior, and links to both the Fundy and Atlantic coasts via several major canoe routes.

With over 100 lakes, 9 rivers, and many streams to explore, there are many possibilities for wilderness travel. Most rivers in the region reach peak flow in April and May, and consist of lakes and pools divided by narrow stillwaters, with numerous swifts, rapids, and small falls. Carries (portage routes) are only maintained by the occasional use of fellow travellers, so expect hazards such as fallen trees, rough and wet ground, and overgrown vegetation.

This section provides basic route planning information and descriptions for several rivers. Each is described from main and alternate access points. Several routes may be combined and accessed from within Tobetic Wilderness Area for extended wilderness tripping. Many routes include moving water sections (class I-III) that require scouting, lining, or carrying. Paddlers must be skilled in appropriate moving water techniques and carry required safety equipment. The water level in some lakes and streams is influenced by control structures downstream. Please use caution when navigating these "flowage" waters.

Upper Sissiboo Canoe Route

The Upper Sissiboo offers a string of lakes, joined by short carries and streams that wind through expansive meadows. Lake Joli is an excellent day-use destination for beginners, and the Ninth to Sixth Lake section is suitable for novice paddlers. The flowage sections below Sixth Lake may be dangerous. The combination of challenging navigation, remoteness, and carries on the Whitesand route requires greater skill and experience. Sporting Lake Stream is more suited for novice and intermediate paddlers.

Approach the Upper Sissiboo from the maintained public road leading from Bear River through Morganville to the landing on the north shore of Lake Joli. Launch and proceed southeast across the lake to a meandering channel that flows into the lake from the south. Head up this channel through the marsh to its end, where a carry is clearly marked leading you from Lake Joli to Ninth Lake and the chain of lakes that are the Upper Sissiboo. Continue travelling south across small lakes linked by short carries through Ninth, Eighth, Seventh, and eventually Sixth Lake, where Sixth Lake Stream leads into the wilderness area. This approach usually requires a full day of travel.



The region's geologic history, particularly glaciation events, has also helped create many varied and diverse ecosystems. These ecosystems include barrens, semi-barrens, coniferous or mixed forests, bogs, and fens. Many ecosystems remain undisturbed, with most native species and natural processes intact. Remnant pockets of the Acadian forest are present in old-growth hemlock stands at Sporting Lake and North Bingay Lake, old-growth mixed forest at Dish Lake, and old-growth white pine forest at Big Pine Lake.

Tobetic Wilderness Area reflects an important part of Nova Scotia's rich cultural heritage. In the Tobetic, this heritage includes ancient Mi'kmaw sites, land use by British and Acadian settlers, and traditions of recreational use. Cultural resources are evident today in aboriginal travel routes, remains of early European settlement, and landmarks from a prosperous guiding era.

Travel in the wilderness area immediately connects present-day users to a rich part of Nova Scotia's outdoor heritage. Traditions of wilderness travel, canoeing, tenting, hiking, hunting, trapping, and angling have been enjoyed in different parts of the Tobetic region over many years. Many of these activities are valued today by people seeking the challenge and solitude offered by wilderness.

Regional Context

Tobetic Wilderness Area is located in interior southwestern Nova Scotia. Nearby communities include Bear River to the north, Weymouth to the northwest, Kempville to the west, the Ohio to the south, and Caledonia to the east. Larger regional centres include Annapolis Royal, Digby, Yarmouth, Shelburne, and Liverpool.

Within the region, there are other designated lands that protect natural, cultural, or wilderness values. The closest neighbour to Tobetic Wilderness Area is Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site of Canada, which shares part of the eastern wilderness area boundary. Kejimikujik protects a representative portion of the Atlantic Coast Uplands natural region and commemorates the significance of the Mi'kmaw cultural landscape of the area. Kejimikujik offers day-use and backcountry recreation opportunities including walking, cycling, camping, angling, hiking, and canoeing. Some visitors to the national park also venture into Tobetic Wilderness Area via a backcountry canoe route that links to Peblelogogitch Stillwater on the Shelburne River.

Seasonal Conditions

Interior southwestern Nova Scotia is colder in the winter and hotter in the summer than anywhere else in the province. Summer temperatures typically range from 5°C to 30°C from May through

October. Late spring often brings several heavy rainstorms, with the potential for thunderstorms in the summer months. Its low relief and barren vegetation make the Tobetic region prone to strong winds, which generally develop from the southwest. Winter temperatures vary from -20°C to +5°C from November through April. Snow cover is common in winter, and the inland location of the wilderness area makes it more likely to have heavier snowfalls than coastal areas. Through the winter months many lakes and river still-waters freeze, with "ice out" generally occurring in early April.

While everyone has a favourite time to explore the Tobetic region, early spring and autumn are popular seasons. At this time river water levels are higher for wilderness canoeing, there are fewer biting insects, and daytime temperatures are more moderate. At any time of year you must be prepared for seasonal extremes. Start by understanding what to expect, and be sure to check the most recent local weather forecast before departure. For extended tripping, consider carrying a weather radio or know the signs to recognize approaching weather.

Unique Areas

Within Tobetic Wilderness Area lie many unique and outstanding sites. Some of these have been recognized as nationally or provincially significant.

Sporting Lake Nature Reserve protects outstanding old-growth eastern hemlock and white pine forest on one large and two smaller islands. Due to its sensitivity to human disturbance, camping, campfires, woodcutting, littering, and hunting are not permitted on these islands.



The Shelburne Canadian Heritage River flows through the heart of Tobetic Wilderness Area. The Shelburne was recognized for its high degree of natural integrity and recreational opportunities. This distinction does not involve any specific regulations, but recognizes the outstanding values of the river, which is protected and managed by the Province in cooperation with regional partners Bowater Mersey Paper Company, Kejimikujik, and Nova Scotia Power.

Tobetic park was established as a game sanctuary in 1927, with guiding, angling, hunting and canoeing as the focus of management. In 1968, the original game sanctuary boundary was adjusted, with the new area designated as a wildlife management area to provide for wildlife protection and research. This wildlife management area includes both public and private lands, and overlaps with the central and eastern portions of Tobetic Wilderness Area

Private Camps

On your travels you may encounter one of the many private camps scattered throughout the Tobetic region on both private land and leased public land. Please do not use these sites without express permission from the camp owner or leaseholder.



Cultural Sites

Two old ranger cabins, located at Buckshot Lake and Sand Beach Lake on the Shelburne River, are evidence of the area's long history of wilderness management. While these structures are of historical interest to many travelers, they have deteriorated well below safety standards and are not suitable for occupancy.

Located on the east side of Peblelogogitch Lake is Mason's cabin, one of Kejimikujik's 46 backcountry sites. This well-maintained cabin has a wood stove and several bunks. Reservations are required by calling the Park at 682-2772.

Access and Vehicle Use

Tobetic Wilderness Area is remote, and even vehicle travel to reach the wilderness area may be difficult. Boundary signs are posted at main access points, with the boundary otherwise unmarked on the ground. Many access points require travel on loose surface roads. Please use great care when driving these roads. Be aware of active forestry operations and large trucks. If you are parking and leaving a vehicle, please make sure it is well off the road.

There are main recreation access points along the wilderness area's northern, southern, and eastern boundaries. These are at Lake Joli via the upper Sissiboo River, the Indian Fields road to the Roseway and West Jordan rivers, and through Kejimikujik via the lower Shelburne River. Secondary access points are located at Fifth Lake landing, Sporting Lake Stream, and the East Branch of the Tusket River. No trailhead facilities or parking areas have been developed at any access points.

Vehicle travel, including motorboat use, is generally not permitted within Tobetic Wilderness Area. Limited vehicle access is possible along the Indian Fields road, which begins at Highway 208 at Indian Fields. This rugged road crosses the Roseway River at Upset Falls and continues northeast to a landing at Silvery Lake, with a branch leading northwest to a landing at Crain Lake. Be warned: this unmaintained seasonal road is very rough and requires an all-wheel-drive, high-clearance vehicle. No other roads or trails leading from the Indian Fields road are open for vehicle travel.

The rugged and remote reaches of our Tobetic provide challenging adventures and demand self-reliance of wilderness travelers. For those who seek it out, its solitude offers relaxation and rejuvenation, inspires creativity, and imparts a sense of humility and awe.

—excerpt from "Our Tobetic": the vision for Tobetic Wilderness Area

Wilderness Recreation

Tobetic Wilderness Area offers a place to journey into undeveloped wild lands, to experience natural sites and sounds of quiet streams, ancient forests, and open barrens, and to enjoy the solitude of being away from it all. The wilderness area is managed to maintain this wildness and, therefore, has little recreation infrastructure. Wilderness recreation such as tenting, hiking, canoeing, and wildlife viewing are some of the many activities enjoyed by travelers to the Tobetic. Sportfishing, hunting, and trapping activities are also carried out in some parts of the wilderness area.

Sportfishing, Hunting, and Trapping

Nova Scotia and parts of Tobetic Wilderness Area have a long heritage of hunting, trapping, and sportfishing. These activities are still enjoyed today. Relatively undisturbed wildlife habitat and low hunting and angling pressures in Tobetic Wilderness Area provide many unique opportunities. The Tobetic region is home to many wildlife species that are fished, hunted, or trapped. These include brook trout, white-tailed deer, bobcat, and beaver, among others. Moose was once a highly sought game species. It is now protected as an endangered species. It is an offence to hunt moose anywhere in mainland Nova Scotia.

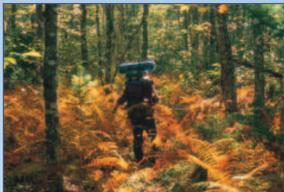


Traditional patterns of hunting and trapping in Tobetic Wilderness Area are subject to the same regulatory and licensing requirements as other lands in the province. In addition, baiting animals for hunting is not permitted anywhere in Tobetic Wilderness Area. Hunting and trapping is prohibited within Tobetic Wildlife Management Area, including the portion that overlaps with the wilderness area, except for an annual 6-day muzzle-loaded hunt. A Summary of Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations is published annually. For more information on hunting and trapping, contact Nova Scotia Natural Resources.

Sportfishing in Tobetic Wilderness Area is subject to the same regulatory and licensing requirements as other waterways in the province. Annual regulations concerning fees, bag limits, size limits, and season dates are published in the Angler's Handbook. For more information on sportfishing, contact Nova Scotia Agriculture and Fisheries.

Tenting

Tenting (or camping) is an important part of many wilderness recreation activities. While travelling the major canoe routes described below you may find established sites traditionally used by other paddlers. You may tent or camp throughout the wilderness area, except where posted. In all instances, no-trace practices must be followed. Please refer to the Camping and Campfire Standards section for more details.



Hiking

Hiking in Tobetic Wilderness Area is best suited for experienced off-trail hikers with strong navigation skills, seeking strenuous, multiple-day wilderness trips. While there are no developed hiking trails in Tobetic Wilderness Area, hiking opportunities may be found in the wilderness area by exploring old forestry roads, cart tracks, and footpaths. Most of the routes are long and unmarked. None were designed with hikers in mind, so there are few scenic look-offs and few leveling areas. Be prepared for a rugged hiking experience.

Wildlife Viewing

As a remote and undeveloped region, Tobetic Wilderness Area offers good opportunities to see wildlife in a natural setting. Your sense of discovery may lead you to explore the moss-covered floor of a hemlock forest or the fragile plants dotting a rocky lake shoreline.

While in the Tobetic you may see mammals such as beaver, porcupine, snowshoe hare, and white-tailed deer. If you are lucky you may see the more secretive moose and black bear. Warblers are common throughout the summer in forests and barrens, while loons and other waterfowl are often seen on the lakes and rivers. At night, especially in winter, you may hear barred or great horned owl. The strikingly large, pileated woodpecker can sometimes also be seen. Blooms of forest wildflowers like starflower, painted trillium, hunchberry, and goldthread can be seen through the spring and summer. Watch for the beautiful pink flowers of Dragon's-mouth and rose pogonia orchids when passing bogs in summer.

To help protect wildlife, avoid trampling sensitive vegetation, observe animals from a distance, and be aware that wildlife may be especially sensitive at certain times of year.



Safety and Preparedness

Tobetic Wilderness Area is truly a wilderness destination. Users must accept responsibility for their own health and safety, and arrive prepared for wilderness conditions. In this remote and relatively isolated region rescue of a lost or injured person may be difficult and dangerous. Proper trip planning is essential. Take account of seasonal conditions when considering modes of travel, drinking water sources, and supplies.

When travelling into the Tobetic

- Plan your route carefully—leave a written trip plan with someone at home outlining your destination, your travel route, and when you expect to return.
- Honestly assess your skills and equipment—know your limits and those of your group.
- Carry and know how to use wilderness first aid, rescue, and safety equipment.
- Dress appropriately, and be prepared for all possible weather conditions.
- Ensure that you are self-sufficient and prepared to spend the night in case of an emergency.
- If you are lost or injured, you are on your own—use your skills to determine if you can treat the injury or attempt to return safely. If you cannot return safely, stay put. This will make it easier for rescuers to find you based on your written trip plan.

Wilderness First Aid

In the case of injury, you may be many hours or even days from medical assistance. In a wilderness setting, minor injuries or ailments can quickly become serious or life threatening. This may jeopardize the safety of the group. Before travelling in the interior of Tobetic Wilderness Area, you or members of your group should be skilled in wilderness first aid. Your wilderness first aid kit is a critical part of your equipment. It should be fully stocked, and you should know how to use it.

Drinking Water

Be safe—assume that all surface water in Nova Scotia may be contaminated with Giardia or other water-borne pathogens or diseases. Choose drinking water from flowing sources and properly treat it by boiling, filtering, or using chemical purification.

Communication and Navigation

Communication is very limited in the Tobetic region. There is no consistent cell phone and radio coverage in any part of the wilderness area. Since contacting help may be difficult, take extra safety precautions to minimize your risk of becoming lost or injured. This guide and map are designed for trip planning, and are not suitable for navigation. Topographic maps are strongly recommended for navigating in Tobetic Wilderness Area. Map and compass skills are required for safe wilderness travel. Do not rely solely on GPS navigation, as a damaged unit can leave you in a dangerous situation.

Equipment

Having the right equipment can make all the difference for a pleasant, rewarding, and environmentally responsible wilderness experience. Your tent, sleeping bag, and other gear should be appropriate to the season and nature of your trip.

In very cold weather, wear layers of wool and synthetics beneath waterproof outer layers. In early spring and late fall, water temperatures are low and wetsuits are recommended for canoeists. In very hot weather, proper sun protection and loose fitting clothing are important.

The following equipment is recommended for safely exploring Tobetic Wilderness Area:

- warm and weatherproof clothing, worn in layers (with an extra set)
- sun protective hat and clothing
- sunscreen and insect repellent
- small garden trowel (for digging catholes for human waste disposal)
- portable cooking stove and an adequate supply of fuel
- flashlight or candle lantern
- portable basin and small strainer for dishwashing and water disposal
- biodegradable soap
- reusable food containers—no glass
- first aid, survival, and repair kits
- topographic map and compass
- binoculars, for viewing wildlife from a distance
- method of water purification
- plastic bags for carrying out garbage
- free-standing tent and a lightweight tarp
- waterproof matches and fire-starting materials

Additional Information

Local Services, Guides & Outfitters

Many services are available in each of the regional centres of Yarmouth, Digby, Annapolis, Shelburne, and Liverpool. In addition, convenience stores and gas stations may be found in villages within 20 km of each main access point to the wilderness area.

Local guide and outfitter services are offered in many towns near Tobetic Wilderness Area. Guides and outfitters can provide important local expertise, supplies, and equipment. Consult local tourist bureaus or information centres for the names and locations of businesses that offer services for wilderness travellers.

Permits & Registration

Permits are not required for travel or tenting in Tobetic Wilderness Area. However, if you choose to notify police or government agencies of your trip plans, please understand that authorities are not equipped to monitor for your safe return. Ensure that you have left a trip plan and time of expected return with someone at home.

Registration is not required for travel or tenting in Tobetic Wilderness Area. However, if you plan to include travel in Kejimikujik, please contact visitor services at (902) 682-2772 to ensure that you are properly registered for your time spent in the national park.

Wilderness Stewardship

Make stewardship a part of your Tobetic experience. Record what you see and do in a trip log or journal, and take plenty of photographs of your adventures. After your trip, please feel free to share any concerns or questions with staff at the regional Protected Areas office. To assist us in planning and management, staff are particularly interested in hearing about wildlife sightings, route conditions, and environmental damage caused by recreational use.

To report a person in danger or lost in the woods call 9-1-1.

To report wildlife poaching or to report a forest fire call 1-800-565-2224.

Keep It Wild

You can help protect Tobetic Wilderness Area by adopting a Leave No Trace ethic and using low-impact techniques when travelling and camping. Wilderness is fragile and can be easily spoiled by the use and activities of those who love it most. To retain the high quality of our wilderness, we must all accept responsibility for minimizing our impact. The following Leave No Trace principles outline a responsible approach to adopt when visiting a wilderness area.

Plan ahead and prepare—Proper planning is the best way to minimize your impact, while ensuring you have a safe and enjoyable wilderness trip.

Minimize campfire impacts—Campfires can cause lasting effects. Use a stove for cooking. Exercise care if you decide to build a fire and collect firewood.

Travel and camp on durable surfaces—Be mindful, for even small physical impacts may leave a lasting impression on our wild places.

Leave what you find—Allow others who follow you to enjoy wilderness in a natural state by leaving rocks, plants, and other natural objects as you find them.

Respect wildlife—Be aware that your presence affects wildlife. Please exercise caution.

Be considerate of other visitors—Most travellers to wilderness areas are hoping to spend time in a wilderness setting, for solitude and natural experience.

Dispose of waste properly—Garbage and human waste left in wild areas is unsightly, and may pose a risk to human health or wildlife. To avoid attracting animals to your site and to minimize the risk to your equipment and supplies, store food and trash securely, hang food at night, and separate cooking and sleeping areas.

For more information on Leave No Trace visit <www.lnt.org>. For tips on low-impact recreation for Nova Scotia's wilderness areas, view the Keep It Wild brochure on the Protected Areas website, or contact Environment and Labour or Natural Resources to request a copy.

Camping & Campfire Standards

Many of the wilderness activities enjoyed in Tobetic Wilderness Area involve camping. No-trace camping, which follows Leave No Trace principles, is permitted in most locations within the wilderness area. Visitors tend to use existing sites traditionally used by wilderness travellers.

The following conditions apply to camping and campfires in Tobetic Wilderness Area, and are enforced under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act.

- No campsite development is permitted. Do not cut or remove vegetation, clear brush, or level ground. New campsites that require such activities may only be established with written authorization.
- Practice no-trace camping. Keep camping areas clean and sanitary at all times.
- Pack out all refuse and litter. To dispose of human waste, dig a latrine hole 15–25 cm deep and at least 50 m away from any trail or water source. Bury soiled toilet paper with the waste or pack it out.
- Maximum 9 people per campsite at any one time.
- A campfire is permitted only in an existing campfire ring built on mineral soil or bare rock, or in a pan supplied by the user. Do not cut or remove vegetation or remove organic soils. Campfire rings must be less than 60 cm in diameter and have a minimum clearance of 2 m from flammable materials. Fires must be kept completely contained within the campfire ring. Campfires must be drowmed thoroughly and the ashes stirred repeatedly to ensure the campfire is completely extinguished.
- Collect firewood from fallen deadwood only.
- Campfires are prohibited when indicated by posted notices.

During the late spring and summer months, an elevated forest fire risk may lead to a ban on open fires or, in more extreme instances, to a general woods closure. When this occurs, these provisions apply to all provincial lands, including wilderness areas. Please allow flexibility in your trip planning in case of a fire ban or woods closure. Consult the local fire weather index, listen for public service announcements, or contact Nova Scotia Natural Resources to learn more.

Topographic Maps

The following 1:50 000 topographic maps cover all of Tobetic Wilderness Area.



Topographic maps are available at many local businesses and from provincial Land Information Centres including those located in Bridgewater, Yarmouth, and Lawrencetown. Maps may be ordered from the Nova Scotia Geomatics Centre at 1-800-798-0706 and the Canada Map Office at 1-800-465-6272.

Recommended References

Protecting Wilderness: A Summary of Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas Protection Act

Keep It Wild: A Guide for Low Impact Recreation in Nova Scotia Wilderness Areas

Backcountry Guide: Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site of Canada

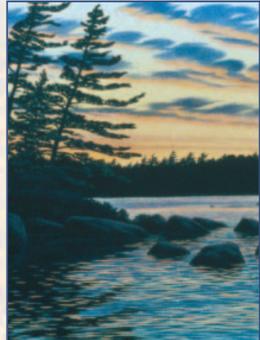
Paddling the Tobetic: Canoe Routes of Southwestern Nova Scotia The Tent Dwellers

Guides of the North Woods: Hunting and Fishing Tales from Nova Scotia (1860–1960)

Nova Scotia's Annual Vacation Guide & Planner



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PLANNING WILDERNESS
TRAVEL IN TOBETIC
WILDERNESS AREA

NOVA SCOTIA
Environment and Labour
Environmental and Natural Areas Management Division
Protected Areas Branch

Contacts

General Information and Management Inquiries
Nova Scotia Environment and Labour,
Protected Areas Branch—Western Region
60 Logan Road Bridgewater, NS B4V 3J8
902-543-4685
www.gov.ns.ca/enla/pareas

Wildlife Management Area, Hunting and Trapping Regulations, Forest Fire Index
Nova Scotia Natural Resources, Regional Services Division
99 High Street Suite 211 Bridgewater, NS B4V 1V8
902-543-8167
www.gov.ns.ca/natr

Sportfishing Regulations
Nova Scotia Agriculture and Fisheries,
Inland Fisheries Division
Box 700 Picton, NS B0K 1H0
902-485-5006
www.gov.ns.ca/nsaf/sportfishing

National Park Information and Registration
Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site of Canada, Visitor Services
Box 236 Maitland Bridge, NS B0T 1B0
902-682-2772
www.pc.gc.ca

Tourism Information and Vacation Planning
Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage
800-565-2224
www.novascotia.com

Keep It Wild
Nova Scotia's Protected Areas

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