

**Introduction to the  
INTERNATIONAL APPALACHIAN TRAIL  
IN QUEBEC  
(IAT-Quebec or IAT-QC)**

Forillon National Park Section  
Gaspé Coast Section  
Upper Gaspé Section  
Gaspé Park Section  
Matane Wildlife Preserve -  
    Cap-Chat River-  
    Matane Section  
La Vallée Section  
Matapedia Section

Prepared by  
Members of the  
IAT-Quebec Committees

February 3, 2001



## The International Appalachian Trail in Quebec

by Viateur De Champlain, President  
IAT-Quebec

### From Dream to Reality

The dream of creating a 1106-kilometre hiking trail linking the highest peaks in the Appalachians, as a symbol of international cooperation, was first suggested in 1994. Many volunteers in Quebec, New Brunswick and Maine believed in this idea and joined in the task of planning and carrying out the project. The trail links Mount Jacques-Cartier in Quebec, Mount Carleton in New Brunswick, and Mount Katahdin in Maine, and the northern end is at Cap-Gaspé in Forillon National Park. In the south, it merges with a trail that has been in existence for over 60 years, attracting 37 thousand hikers per year, the *Appalachian Trail* (3460 km). Together, the trails, known as **the International Appalachian Trail / Sentier international des Appalaches**, and the **Appalachian Trail**, total 4566 km. in length. Another trail, from Springer Mountain in Georgia, will take you all the way to Key West, Florida (2535 km). At the beginning of the new millennium, the *Eastern Continental Trail / Sentier de la côte Est*, with a total length of 7109 km from Cap-Gaspé to Key West, has become a reality.

The *International Appalachian Trail*, beginning or ending at Cap-Gaspé in Forillon National Park, is 1106 km long. From Rivière-au-Renard to Mount St. Pierre, it follows the sea and the mountains, leading from village to village, occasionally reaching the shore of the St. Lawrence River. From Mount St. Pierre, it heads towards Mount Jacques Cartier, crosses Gaspé Park to Mount Logan and crosses the Matane Wildlife Preserve. Then, skirting the Fernald Quebec Ecological Reserve, it reaches the Matane River and continues on towards Matapedia Lake before descending into the valley as far as Matapedia. The IAT is 672 km long in Quebec, 274 km in New Brunswick and 160 km in Maine as far as Mount Katahdin.

### Reception Areas

The layout of the trails was coordinated by the Quebec corporation **International Appalachian Trail Quebec** (IAT-QC) from 1996 until the end of 2000. The organization set up a development plan for 1996-2000 to find the monies required to fund the infrastructure, and organized regional committees to involve the communities affected and to ensure that management of the work was decentralized. Many volunteers and organizations in each region crossed by the trail were involved in all aspects of the project. Volunteers belonging to the Matapedia, La Vallée, Matane, Cap-Chat River, Upper Gaspé and Gaspé Coast regional committees planned and managed the

establishment and development of infrastructures, by constructing access trails to municipalities or in other ways, so that hikers, while enjoying a first-class attraction, can take advantage of the services offered in inhabited areas adjacent to the trail. The promoters thus ensure that service providers near the trail are accessible to hikers.

Laying out the trail, including reception centre equipment, required close to \$3,000,000 in subsidies, gifts, goods, and services. In addition to the sponsors and donors, funds were obtained from the Government of Quebec (through the Lower St. Lawrence and the Gaspé Peninsula CRCs [regional joint action and development council], Tier II of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Employment Quebec, Tourism Quebec, the Gaspé Peninsula Development Fund, the Ministry of the Regions), Parks Canada, certain municipalities and Matane Junior College.

Facilities for hikers include 22 shelters, 13 of which are Gaspé Park, 3 between Mount St. Pierre and Rivière-au-Renard, 1 between Mount St. Pierre and the Gaspé Park, 2 in La Vallée and 3 in the Matapedia sector. Eighteen campgrounds were laid out with dry toilets and 3 tenting sites located as follows: 9 in Matane Wildlife Preserve, 4 between Grande Vallée and Rivière-au-Renard, and 5 in the Matapedia Valley. Wilderness camping areas were laid out in Forillon National Park. Kiosks, shelters and information panels have been constructed in strategic locations and route markers have been set up all along the IAT-Quebec.

### **Aiming For a Varied Clientele**

The trail has some unique attractions. The territory it runs through is highly varied and hikers encounter magnificent, constantly changing landscapes. Known as the *Appalachian Mountains Trail / Sentier des Monts Appalaches*, it stretches from Cap-Gaspé to Springer Mountain in Georgia. The IATQ is part of a series of trails extending from Cap-Gaspé to Key West, Florida called the *Eastern Continental Trail / Sentier de la côte Est*. It is 7101 km long and can be hiked for a whole year or enjoyed in small portions. This network of trails has become a focal point for hikers from here, from the United States and even from Europe. Two Canadians and more than 30 Americans have already completed the whole route. Short-distance hikers are no longer even counted.

The 672-kilometre section of the IAT in the province of Quebec is expected to attract Quebec, Canadian, American and European tourists who will take short or long hikes and who, in general, are fans of ecotourism and adventure tourism. Roughly a third of the trail, from Matapedia to the Matane Reserve, runs close to towns and villages. Nearly 70% of the route is of the "sea and mountain" type since it provides access to mountains in the interior of Gaspé and occasionally follows the shore of the St. Lawrence between Mount St. Pierre and Forillon National Park, and passes through all the villages along the way.

Because of the uniqueness of its route, the trail appeals to a diverse clientele interested in activities such as hiking and observing birds, fauna and flora. It also provides an ideal access to nature for photographers and those interested in observing various types of natural phenomena.

From the idea first conceived in 1994, the *International Appalachian Trail* has now become a reality.

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## A Landscape of Sea and Mountains

by Stéphanie Tétreault  
Forillon National Park

As the end or starting point of the *International Appalachian Trail*, Forillon National Park will put you through your paces, from the start to the end of your hike. The 1106-km journey begins or ends at Cap-Gaspé, at the very tip of the Gaspé Peninsula!

### All Trails Lead to Cap-Gaspé

The IAT leads you through the southeastern section of Quebec via the Matapedia valley, the Matane Wildlife Preserve and Gaspé Provincial Park, through Forillon National Park to spectacular Cap-Gaspé. Even though the IAT reveals only a small sample of Quebec's landscape, nature lovers will not fail to marvel at the diversity of all they see.

### Wild but Accessible

Established in 1970, Forillon National Park contains natural features unique to the marine and terrestrial environment of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It has 10 distinct ecological environments, including forests, cliffs, meadows, sand dunes, and marshes. The synergy between sea and mountains makes Forillon the ultimate destination.

The Forillon section of the IAT starts at Rivière-au-Renard and ends at Cap-Gaspé, the continental terminus of the Appalachian chain. High mountains, ridges, bays and peninsulas are part of the landscape along the way. Totalling 45 km in length, it crosses the national park from west to east. In the summer of 1998, 17 km of trail were laid out, with the remainder already in place. The Forillon section is divided into two parts, the interior and the peninsula.

### The Interior

This 36-km section links Rivière-au-Renard to Grande-Grave. It is the wildest and most rugged part because of its remoteness and the few structures built there. Take the *Les Lacs* and *Les Crêtes* trails inside the national park, which has three wilderness camping areas as well as some lookouts. You can recharge your batteries here in this unique natural environment. You may have an opportunity to observe the black bear and moose common in this area.

The highest point in this section is the Mount St. Alban observation tower, situated at an altitude of 283 metres, offering a spectacular panorama over the river and the gulf, Gaspé Bay, Forillon, Gaspé and Percé. Offshore, in clear weather, you may even be convinced you see Anticosti, far in the distance.

### Forillon Peninsula

Stretching from Grande-Grave to Cap-Gaspé, this section is definitely the most spectacular but also the most accessible. Its relatively short distance (9 km) makes it much appreciated by less experienced hikers. There are many facilities to make your hike easier, including stairs, lookouts, bridges, interpretation panels and cooking shelters. The peninsula features imposing scenery and magnificent characters - you might get to see some seals and whales.

Also, an interpretation centre at the end point of the trail has been erected in honour of the IAT by Parks Canada, which is responsible for maintenance of the Forillon sector.

## Useful Information for Inquiring Minds

The activities offered include both short- and long-distance hiking of course, but why not also try your hand at observing and photographing birds, mammals, wild flowers and other natural phenomena? Some trails even bring you to the shore of Gaspé Bay.

Some designated areas offer minimum facilities (dry toilets) for wilderness camping enthusiasts. However, for those accustomed to comfort, modern campgrounds (electricity and showers, among other conveniences) are also available.

The Forillon section of the IAT allows you to experience the past, the present and the future in one of the oldest mountain chains in the world. Explore this unique territory that brings man, land and sea together in harmony.

## Along the Coast of Gaspé

by Jacques Chartier

IAT-Gaspé Coast (from Madeleine to Rivière-au-Renard)

On the Gaspé Coast, the *International Appalachian Trail* extends from the Madeleine-Centre municipal stop, situated at the eastern exit of the village, to Cap-Gaspé in Forillon National Park. Between the sea and mountains, it winds through landscapes and offers surprises and a broad palette of regional tourist attractions. It was laid out to go through the various villages along the coast where hikers can find facilities. This was in order to avoid unfair competition and give hikers an opportunity to meet local residents. I would like to offer the following description of the trail from Madeleine to the boundary of Forillon National Park.

On the site of the Madeleine municipal stop, you will notice a slight change in IAT signage. Follow highway 132 for a few hundred metres to the intersection with the forest road that follows the river and brings you to the summit of a plateau. The Grand Sault of the Madeleine River is a magnificent site. The name refers to the rapids and the steep cliffs in this part of the valley of one of the Gaspé Peninsula's beautiful salmon fishing rivers.

The Grand Sault campground has three tenting sites and is equipped with a dry toilet and a picnic table. It offers an unimpeded view of the Madeleine River valley and the St. Lawrence. The trail winds over mountains, bringing the hiker close to a chain of lakes, and then gradually descends again towards Grande Vallée. It is one of the steepest sections of the Gaspé Peninsula. All visitors return home with enduring memories of the Madeleine shores.

The trail passes through the roadside rest area that overlooks Grande-Vallée and offers an impressive view of this coastal village nestled at the mouth of the river of the same name. Grande-Vallée offers hikers all the amenities. Visit the site of the fishing port, where you will find facilities for a picnic, and take advantage of the IAT access point shelter to consult maps and documentation to plan your next moves carefully.

At the exit from the village, the trail follows the seashore. The hiker is alone on the shore for five km, as though on a desert island. It is easy to get to the long *Point de petite vallée* from here. The *Café de la Vieille Forge* and the *Maison Lebreux* are not to be missed. The reception centre, the accommodation, and the cultural products of these establishments have a reputation for quality that extends far beyond the borders of Quebec.

Petite Vallée offers various accommodation, restaurant and provisioning facilities for hikers. The trail goes through the village and follows the coastline past the site of the fishing port where an IAT information shelter and an information office for the local area have been set up. This is a very

interesting site, ideal for a picnic on the banks of the Petite-Vallée River. From there, go back to the beach and follow the trail for a little less than five km.

The trail then heads to the mountains. It climbs towards the summits, winding past a series of lakes - Lac Long, Lac Brûlé, Lac de l'Original and Lac Asselin - which are in the Beauséjour Outfitter's Preserve. The IAT follows the trails in the outfitter's preserve for several kilometres. Landscapes of lakes and forests, with their stillness and greenery, contrast with the seashore. The trail reaches "Les Terrasses," which gives its name to the site of the next campground, where there are unimpeded views of the village of Pointe Frégate and the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

A dozen kilometres through the forest separate this site from the Cascades shelter behind the village of Cloridorme. The IAT shelters are large and comfortable. Equipped with a wood stove and a cooking area, they can comfortably accommodate eight people overnight. From the chalet terrace, you can look out over the valley of the Petit-Cloridorme River, which you can hear cascading below, and the St. Lawrence far in the distance.

A little further down the trail, still heading toward Forillon National Park, the hiker has the choice of going to the village of Cloridorme three kilometres away, or continuing on the hike, which turns south for a few kilometres to Lake Écureuil. A 10-kilometre walk through the woods leads to a forest road that doubles back towards the sea and comes out to the coast near the village of St. Yvon. From there, the trail follows the shore for five kilometres. Along this section the coast is made up of cliffs and makes quite an impression. Piles of stones guide hikers as far as the Grand-Étang rest stop.

This site is very popular with travellers because of the awe-inspiring landscape. You find yourself on the shore at the foot of the mountain, looking over the banks of the Anse de l'Étang, into which the lake and river of the same name flow, over ledges that form small waterfalls. There is interesting geographical diversity here. Note that the site is equipped with picnic tables and toilets in season. From there, the trail follows Highway 132 for a few km, since it was not possible to obtain a right of way through the woods in this region and the shore is impassable.

The trail heads south towards the mountain and follows the first ridge until the Portage St. Hélier waterfall. This charming site was chosen for the campground. The "Waterfall" campground offers three tenting sites, picnic tables, dry toilets and running water, as designed by nature. The trail follows the ridge and offers views of the forest, the lakes and the majestic St. Lawrence in the background. You will never tire of searching the big river trying to see ships of every kind. Traffic along the river is facilitated by a network of lighthouses located at strategic sites along the coast.

In the next leg, it is possible to visit the Pointe-à-la-Renommée lighthouse. Most Quebecers will recognize it, since it was dismantled in 1977 and brought to the site in the Port of Quebec, not far from the Lévis ferry, then brought back to the original location a few years ago, in November 1997. The IAT follows the "Pioneers" trail, laid out by the group responsible for the Pointe-à-la-Renommée site, to the "Zephyr" shelter, which takes its name from the stream that supplies it with drinking water. This shelter can accommodate eight people overnight. It is set up near the seaside, in a small clearing, sheltered from the offshore winds. The view here is incomparable.

Following the seashore for a distance of nearly five kilometres, you reach the small fishing port of l'Anse-à-Valleau. Here, you can plan the next legs of your trip by consulting the maps and documentation available at the IAT access point shelter. There are picnic tables and dry toilets at this site, which has been laid out and is maintained by members of the local site development committee. Soak up the fishing atmosphere by visiting this small harbour. Plan the next few days well because the trail now heads for the mountains directly south. Your time at the beach is coming to an end.

Just at the exit from l'Anse-à-Valleau village, at the top of the hill, the IAT passes by the "Ancêtres" campground. Gaspé residents make great use of the forest. They cut wood for heating and construction, and hunt and pick berries there. Forest roads and trails for every purpose criss-cross

this particularly well served section. Be alert and pay attention to signs and the many trail markers with the IAT colours.

A few km after walking around Lac-de-la-Ligne, you cross a branch trail that leads to the village of St. Maurice, 4 km away. The trail follows the valley of the Petite-Fourche River. This brings you to the "Carrières" campground, which provides a panoramic view of the abandoned quarry, which shows the geological structure of the region. A small stream supplies the site with drinking water.

The trail goes through forests in which the species and age of the trees is very diverse. The next leg brings you to the "Érablière" shelter. This nine-kilometre leg winds south along the valley of the Petite-Fourche River, then turns east. After the shelter, the trail climbs gradually, then moves from the Petite-Fourche River watershed to the Petit-Renard River watershed.

Gaspé's proximity can be felt, even in the woods. Forest trails and roads are more numerous and more used, and a power transmission line, so characteristic of Quebec, also follows the same valley as the trail.

The Vallée Soleil site has been in operation for two years. It is a conventional campground, but also offers the interesting opportunity of sleeping in either an Indian tepee or a prospector-type tent. A hiker in need of amenities or supplies can head for Rivière-au-Renard, five kilometres away.

The IAT follows the Petit-Renard River for 2.2 km and reaches the boundary of Forillon National Park. At an access point shelter, you will be able to look at the map and see the route of the trail that will take you across the park to Cap-Gaspé, the eastern end of the Appalachian chain.

Work done in the Gaspé Coast section for the IAT (Madeleine to Rivière-au-Renard):  
122.6 km of trail marked

- Three shelters: Cascades  
Zephyr  
Érablière
- Four campgrounds: Grand Sault  
Terrasses  
La Chute  
La Carrière
- Six access point shelters: Grande-Vallée  
Petite-Vallée  
Cloridorme  
L'Anse-à-Valleau  
St Maurice  
Forillon National Park
- Four hundred sign boards
- Three access trails to the IAT St Maurice - an 8 km loop  
Cloridorme - 3km  
The Portage St. Hélier Waterfall -.7km
- A complete description of the trail to the DGPS with possibility of processing this data using powerful "Arcview" software.

## The Mountain and the Sea

by Patrick Golliot

Upper Gaspé IAT (Gaspé Park, Mount St. Pierre to Madeleine)

A trail, the mountain, the sea - what a marvellous display! Moose, caribou, ruffed grouse, the insects of the Gaspé, a unique flora - all this is enough to satisfy the most curious and most avid nature lover!

While exploring the trail bordering the glacial valley of the St. Pierre River, you will discover the treasures of an incredibly varied ecosystem. It is Nordic tundra, at the edge of the sea, along a river as majestic as an ocean. You will be enchanted by the wonders of nature!

From Mount Jacques Cartier, the first day's trek (17 km) brings you to the shelter looking out over the valley. The view from here lets you catch a glimpse of the sea, your destination at the end of a second day of hiking (16 km). Also ahead for you to discover is the picturesque little village of Mont St. Pierre.

A good 16 kilometres will bring you to Anse Pleureuse, after crossing Mount Louis, and at Madeleine, you will complete your journey through the Upper Gaspé in a fourth day.

Along the coast, you may see a whale spouting. But whatever you do, at the end of a day's hiking, don't fall asleep too soon. This is the land of spectacular sunsets and unforgettable nightly displays of the aurora borealis.

## Quebec's Highest Mountains

by Jean-Philippe Chartrand,

Director, Customer Services and Natural Habitat Protection

IAT, Gaspé Park Section (Mount Jacques Cartier – Mount Logan)

### The Sea of Mountains

The Gaspé Peninsula has always been known for its connection with the sea. However, more and more visitors are discovering the other Gaspé Peninsula, the sea of mountains. In the heart of this region with its rugged relief are the highest mountains in Quebec. Mount Logan, Mount Albert, Mount Xalibu and Mount Jacques Cartier are all over 1000 metres high, but they also share the feature of welcoming hikers along the International Appalachian Trail.

The park can be crossed from east to west along the 100-km hiking trail. This was the first section to be incorporated into the International Appalachian Trail. Gaspé Park is indisputably the place for Quebec's mountaineers. This 802-km<sup>2</sup> territory includes the highest part of Mount Shickshock and Mount McGerrigle. Hiking has long held pride of place in the park. This outdoor activity is a favourite way of getting in touch with an exceptional natural setting.

The high mountains in the park are covered with alpine tundra. Several times, during the journey across the park, the hiker enters this "land without trees." In mid-summer, here and there, drifts of snow are slow to melt. Scattered conifers are gnarled by the merciless winters. A few flowers bring colour to the rocky terrain. Caribou wander in search of the limited pasturage.

The hiker repeatedly climbs above the tree line to reach the tundra and then descends again to the forest and shelter. Each ascent renews the pleasure of "floating" through a sea of mountains!

*(Technical information, insert in box)*

Certain rules must be obeyed when travelling in Gaspé Park:

First, the required camping fees must be paid. For a long hike, advance reservations are required for places in shelters. Wilderness camping is prohibited in the park.

Of course, all garbage, including biodegradables, must be carried out. There are no garbage cans in the shelters.

Hikers must stay on the trails. Tramping down the earth has a destructive impact on alpine Arctic vegetation.

For the safety of hikers and the protection of the natural habitat, long hikes in Gaspé Park are offered only in the summer. Several sections of the trails are blocked by snow until mid-June!

In October, the summits of Mount Albert, Mount Jacques Cartier and Mount Richardson are off limits. This is intended to prevent people from disturbing the caribou, which, like many other species, need privacy during the rutting season. In addition, beginning in October, blizzards can greatly increase the difficulty of hiking.

## The Hidden Face of the Shickshock

by Jean-Pierre Gagnon, Regional Committee Chair  
IAT-Cap-Chat River (Matane Wildlife Preserve, Beaulieu lake, Gaspé Park)

Forming the natural extension of the ridge of the Shickshock Mountains west of Gaspé Park, this section of the IAT is located in the Matane Wildlife Preserve. Inaccessible until only a few years ago, it has some bare summits, including Mount Fortin (1020 m), Mount Matawees (1073 m) and Mount Collins (1036 m), where hikers can contemplate the panoramic view. At the foot of the north face of these mountains, the Cap-Chat highland with its wind park and the St. Lawrence River on the horizon are omnipresent.

A wilderness campground has been constructed at the head of the Bascon Stream, 10.5 kilometres from Mount Logan, to allow a stop halfway between the park and the reserve's northern access road, which starts at Cap-Chat and follows the river of the same name.

Then, the IAT gradually descends for 7 kilometres along the enclosed valley of the Bascon Stream. Hélène Falls is tucked away in here, beckoning to passers-by from the top of its 70-metre drop. This drop in altitude is required to cross the Cap-Chat River on the "Petit Saut" footbridge. As the road allows access to this point from Cap-Chat, it is possible to take short hikes to Hélène Falls or Mount Nicol Albert.

The trail then tackles the rather difficult ascent of Mount Nicol Albert (890 m) for 6 km, thereafter continually interspersed with cascades and waterfalls along the Beaulieu Stream. The wooded summit nevertheless offers interesting observation points such as the "Bonhomme" monolith perched above an impressive escarpment.

Farther along, the path continues for 7 km from summit to summit passing Mount Bayfield (885 m), and then arrives at Beaulieu Lake, which has a wilderness campground, marking the end of the Cap-Chat River sector. The next section of the IAT-Matane leading towards Mount Blanc and Matane Lake begins.

### Possible Accesses

From Cap-Chat, take the road that follows the Cap-Chat River for 15 km to the entrance of the Cap-Chat ZEC (controlled harvesting zone) (entry charge). Then, continue for 18 km towards the Matane Wildlife Preserve for 4 kilometres until you reach the Hélène Falls parking lot. To get to Mount Nicol Albert, continue another 1.5 km along this same road.

It is also possible to reach this section by crossing the Matane Wildlife Preserve through the John reception centre, west of the preserve.

The western section of Gaspé Park, including Mount Logan, can be reached using a demand-actuated transportation service offered by Destination Chic-chocs, the organization that manages the park's shelter network, or other service providers.

#### Accommodation

Unlike the shelter system in Gaspé Park, the Matane Wildlife Preserve has campgrounds with tenting sites and dry toilets. Camping fees are charged to defray the costs of maintaining the trail.

It is important to note that no wilderness camping is permitted along the Gaspé Park trail, except in the serviced campgrounds.

## **For Short or Long Hikes**

by Jean-Claude Bouchard, president,  
IAT-Matane (Matane Wildlife Preserve, Matane River to Highway 195, Beaulieu Lake)

### **Summit to Summit**

The section of the International Appalachian Trail administered by the Matane regional committee covers the western part of the Shickshock mountain chain. The route extends from the Highway 195 bridge over the Matane River to Beaulieu Lake, 72 kilometres of linear trail, which totals 92 kilometres when access trails, lookouts and loops are included. Almost the entire route is located inside the Matane Wildlife Preserve, famous for its moose population. For those who know how to spot them, there are signs of their presence everywhere and, with a little bit of luck, you will see this noble creature of the woods.

The hiker has a number of choices: many one-day, 2- to 4-day, and long hikes. The trail, which varies from easy to difficult, depending on the location, accommodates a broad range of hikers and nature lovers. Accommodation along the way consists of primitive campgrounds with tenting sites and dry toilets. There are seven in the Matane sector. Now let us follow a long-distance hiker exploring the area.

### **The River**

Walking from west to east, the hiker first follows the reserve road for a distance of 4 kilometres, then enters the woods to follow the Matane River, then a tributary stream passing Cap-Seize, which is so busy during the salmon fishing season. John Station marks the official entry point into the Matane Wildlife Preserve, which contains 101 km of the IAT. A few hundred metres further along Highway 1, the trail returns to the river and follows it for a distance of more than 3 km. There are so many interesting features: loops, ponds, rapids, pools, beaver dams, footbridges, etc, as well as the many facilities of the Matane River Management Society, including wooden walkways, staircases, bridges and lookouts.

### **The South Escarpment**

Surrounded by aquatic impressions and smells, the hiker tackles the climb towards the first summit, 400 metres high. A small rocky mound there provides a view of the river and John Station.

The trail, now of intermediate difficulty, continues eastwards along the south escarpment of the Shickshock Mountains, at an average altitude of 500 to 600 metres. We then cross a forest zone

that was logged several decades ago and, in the distance, more recently logged areas. Rocky capes provide beautiful, sometimes dizzying, panoramas over the Matane River and the southern part of the peninsula. The first campground is located at Pitounes Stream. We are now 13.3 km from John Station. From here, the trail follows an old forest road. There are splendid views of the enclosed valley of the stream there. After crossing an access trail, we return to the summit at the edge of escarpment and are rewarded with broad panoramas to the south, while far off to the east, we see the silhouette of Mount Albert, some 160 km away on foot.

After descending, crossing some streams, and rising to 690 metres, the trail advances to the edge of the mountain where, branching off to the west, it offers superb views of the Duvivier River valley and the massif of the Mont de l'Ouest. A long descent leads to Tombereau Lake, where the second campground has been laid out. A greatly appreciated moment of quiet awaits you there. Farther along, you cross another access trail before taking the footbridge across the Duvivier River.

### **Mont de l'Ouest and Matane Lake**

The trail becomes now more demanding and difficult because the Mont de l'Ouest, which reaches 922 metres, involves a climb of more than 700 metres. The trail first follows the stream from the west, passing beautiful waterfalls and cascades, and then rises rather steeply to 580 metres, where there are delightful lookouts over the valley below. It then follows the south flank of the massif, where there is a loop trail that leads to the summit. The valiant hiker who ventures here can now contemplate the chain of mountains extending to the east, culminating in Mount Blanc. Back on the main trail and after descending, ascending, and fording more streams, the trail meets a forest road. There is a campground 150 metres to the north, while at 1.6 km we find a superb lookout over Matane Lake, which stretches out 600 metres below.

After continuing under a forest cover, the trail descends again gently through a cleared area with beautiful views of the lake and the surrounding mountains, and then the slope becomes steeper as far as the lake. This beautiful four-kilometre body of water enclosed by high mountains is quite a wonder! The site includes a picnic area, Sépaq chalets and a small dam that controls the water level. The trail goes through here before reaching the campground situated on the eastern shore of the lake.

### **Higher Ever Higher, the North Escarpment**

We have completed more than 46 km, but nearly 26 km still separate us from Beaulieu Lake. Large hardwood trees shade the trail back into the forest and a 0.9-kilometre branch leads to the Matane Lake campground. The climb quickly becomes steeper, offering many views of the lake on one side and the deep valley of the Desjarlais Stream on the other. Then the slope winds along the narrow ridge: we are obviously following a moose trail. A 0.9-kilometre branch leads to a spring and the peak that overlooks the Desjarlais Stream. Very impressive! The trail then turns westward, descends into a beautiful coniferous forest, skirts a peat bog, then ascends again farther on to the peak at an altitude of 790 metres, where there is an unimpeded view of Matane Lake, the lakes that feed into it from the north and the massif of the Mont de l'Ouest. One more kilometre and we will reach the summit, 830 metres high, before again descending towards Gros Ruisseau Lake, which has another primitive campground. The site is charming in spite of the fact that the IAT borders on areas where forestry operations are going on.

Leaving the lake, the trail ascends a nearby mountain that offers beautiful lookouts of the lake and Mount Pointu to the north. The route, which meanders through a sparse forest sprinkled with ferns, now moves in a decidedly northward direction and, after rising and descending, reaches the bare peak of Mount Pointu, at 930 metres. It provides a beautiful 360° panorama, increasingly dominated by the St. Lawrence River and, far off on the horizon, the North Shore.

The descent, through a sparse forest, is rather steep. A small grassy col and then the trail ascends towards Mount Craggy, which offers very fine views from its many rocky promontories. The forest is rather sparse and beautiful here. The descent along the south flank provides remarkable views of Mount Blanc and the col joining them. What beauty! And what a pleasure it is to walk along this narrow col, which is the only route available to all the moose in the area. Further on, the trail crosses the northern access route from the 6th campground, 0.6 km away. Breathe in deeply the fragrant smells rising from the valley before beginning the ascent of Mount Blanc along its southwestern shoulder. The rise, which winds between dispersed clumps of trees, offers an open view to the west. After crossing some beautiful crags, you arrive at the plateau of the summit at a height of 1065 metres. There is a bench for you sit down and admire the panorama that spreads before your eyes. Here, and as far as the summit shelter, the trail joins the Sépaq trail from Highway 1, a distance of 8 km away. The rocky clearing around the shelter encourages you to take a break before entering the krummholz forest that brings you to the rough but impressive north ravine. The trail then swings to the northeast as far as a very beautiful alpine meadow before bringing you to the majestic mountain panorama that will be your route for the next few days. Mount Logan is silhouetted in the distance.

A descent, an ascent and another descent bring you to an attractive alpine peat bog. You come up to the intersection with the trail leading to the Beaulieu Lake campground. Another 10 metres along the loop trail brings you to a large field of ferns and a magnificent panorama of Beaulieu Lake, T Lake and the neighbouring mountains, providing a brief moment of contemplation. Return along the trail and descend steeply down to the campground, which offers a beautiful view to the north. The trail then skirts the eastern shore of the lake after crossing a footbridge across the Beaulieu Stream. There are lovely waterfalls below. The junction of the lake loop trail and the beginning of the Cap-Chat River regional committee section is 2.2 km from the campground. You are then 14.0 km from the Cap-Chat River and 26.0 km from Matane Lake. Happy hiking!

**Photograph Legends** to accompany the text for the magazine *Marche*.

1. Upstream view of the Matane River, at Cape Seize. The first peaks of the Shickshock Mountains are visible in the distance.
2. Matane Lake and the mountainous massif dominated by the Mont de l'Ouest.
3. Looking west, view of the northern escarpment from Mount Blanc.

## The Great Outdoors

by André Fournier, president,  
IAT La Vallée (Matane River to Highway 195, Assemetquagan River)

The IAT crosses the Matapedia Valley back and forth over a distance of 125 km. It follows old game warden trails and occasionally municipal range roads. The long-distance hiker can thus discover all the resources and diversity of a valley devoted to forestry and agriculture.

When following the trail from north to south, hikers start out on Highway 195 at the Matane River. From there, they head towards the municipality of St. Vianney, following mainly forest roads and range roads that surround this municipality where fresh supplies are available if needed. There are forests under management and tree plantations there. Leaving the municipality, the trail crosses private lots to the Seigneurie of Matapedia Lake. In this wild countryside, hikers can observe varied and ever-present fauna. Moose, deer, beaver, lynx and several other small animals frequent this section of the route. Halfway through the Seigneurie, a shelter has been constructed at the summit

of the “Three Sisters,” offering an impressive panorama of the valley from Amqui to Sayabec. The path then turns towards an arboretum with a variety of trees for those interested in Quebec flora. Finally, the trail reaches the Amqui city limits. Hikers can set up their tents two kilometres from the municipality, at tenting sites provided. In Amqui, it is possible to get something to eat and buy supplies at several places.

The trail then heads towards Lac-Au-Saumon and the superb Philomène Falls. From hang-glider sites, the hiker will be able to gaze out over the hilltops to the mountain of Val d'Irène Regional Park, Mount Climont, which overlooks Lac-Au-Saumon and a section of the valley that clearly shows how forestry, agriculture and the outdoors can coexist in harmony. Campgrounds have been laid out in this area. The IAT heads towards St. Alexandre des Lacs, which is well named, and reaches the Marais site, where we can observe the salmon that are held back by a retention barrier during the summer. Some four hundred salmon wait for the spawning season, to finally move to the upper river and reproduce in the fall. The IAT then follows the Causapsal River for a dozen kilometres. You can see the waterfalls that salmon have to face, and traces of the lumber drive that took place here in the early 20th century. Campgrounds are available in this sector.

Crossing the fields, the IAT enters the municipality of Causapsal and reaches the local campground. Hikers can refresh their supplies here. After crossing the Causapsal, the IAT follows forest roads towards St. Marguerite situated at the summit of the Matapedia Mountains. Here again, hikers can observe the logging operations being carried out by landowners in the region. From St. Marguerite, the IAT heads towards the Creux Stream a dozen kilometres away. A five-star shelter is available to hikers. This is the wildest section of his route across Matapedia. For two or three days, hikers will find signs of Gaspé fauna in a landscape strewn with mountains and narrow valleys. It will be necessary to ford a few streams and the Assemetquagan River before heading towards the municipality of St. André and finally reaching Matapédia at the south end of the IAT-Quebec. All along this route, wilderness campgrounds have been laid out for individuals and groups of hikers. This is the most difficult section of the Matapédia route and should not be tackled unless you are in excellent physical shape.

Maps of the IAT-La Vallée are available in the various tourist information kiosks in the region and from the Lower St. Lawrence Gaspé Local Tourist Association.

## Where the Rivers Meet

By Paul Leblanc  
IAT-Matapédia (Assemetquagan River-Matapedia)

Running north-south, the Assemetquagan-Matapedia section takes you from the balsam fir-yellow birch forest in the centre of the peninsula, through magnificent sugar maple groves, to the flood plains of the Restigouche River. This section has 40 km of trails with both difficult sections that take several days and very accessible stretches that take only a few hours.

After fording the Assemetquagan River from the north, the IAT offers some exceptional panoramas of this small salmon river, both at the foot and the top of its over 200-metre slopes. Five km from the river crossing is “Pete’s camp” with accommodation for four hikers, called the “Quartz” because of the white stones strewn through the river bed here. When leaving the slope of this river, the trail crosses a small mountainous massif in moose country, and enters the canyon of the Clark North Stream where the rocks and walls seem to be just waiting for the right moment to collapse. From this canyon, the IAT works its way to the “Le Corbeau” shelter built in 2000, which looks out over the Clark North valley ascending halfway up towards the region’s highest point at 473 m. Extending

out about ten feet, the shelter gallery provides access to a breathtaking mountain sunset. The chalet can comfortably accommodate up to eight.

A short day's walk takes you to the picturesque agroforestry village of St. André de Restigouche, located at the summit of a plateau. You can spend the night at the "Le Turcotte" shelter or the municipal campground. A local co-op offers an opportunity to buy fresh supplies. From St. André to Matapédia, the IAT crosses valleys and plateaus, fields and maple groves, past Pico Falls, inviting you to take a well-deserved midday break. At the end of a 15-km hike from St. André, the trail reaches the headland overlooking the convergence of the Matapédia and Restigouche Rivers. It is easy in this spot to understand the meaning of the Micmac word Matapédia, "where the rivers meet."

According to the first backpackers, or "Thru-Hikers" from the south, Matapédia is a first-class Trail Town choice. Maple syrup, fiddleheads and salmon, stories and legends, rivers and mountains, Matapédia leaves its mark on everyone. With all its transportation, hotel, restaurant and other services, this village's charming setting offers hikers crossing the IAT a good rest spot and a good point for starting or ending the Quebec section. The shuttle service also provides transportation to the IAT for hikes ranging from a few hours to four days. A wilderness campground with a shelter and an information stop were built in the fall of 2000 to serve hikers.

Matapédia wants to be known as an important location for hikers taking the IAT since it is both the border point between Quebec and New Brunswick and the midpoint of the IAT, halfway between Mount Katahdin in Maine and Cap-Gaspé. For the residents of Matapédia, the IAT has already contributed a great deal through the spin-offs from development projects. Today, citizens see this project as an opportunity to promote the ecotourism aspects of local development in order to welcome and serve the hikers who are already beginning to frequent the municipality's walks and trails.

We welcome you all!

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## Useful Contacts

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