

Oysters, mussels, lobster, clams and fish, all thrive in Prince Edward Island

SHUCK OYSTERS

Picking the best catch and gorging on it is the highlight of PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, says MARIELLEN WARD

I stand on the flat barge in the shallow, inland waters of the Atlantic Ocean watching in rapt anticipation as Scott Linkletter of Charlottetown's Raspberry Point Oyster Farm rakes the seaweed-covered bottom. He heaves up a dozen of the tasty bivalves onto the barge. Then, champion oyster shucker Patrick McMurray gets right to work, opening them up and handing them around. I pour the creature and its briny bath into my mouth to savour the sweet-salt flavour. It's a sublime moment, and a defining one, for a visit to Canada's smallest province, Prince Edward Island (PEI). Celebrity chef Michael Smith describes this province as "a giant green farm, surrounded by an abundant deep blue sea and filled with people and stories." It's an island of friendly people, softly rolling hills, and red earth beaches. And of course, the surrounding North Atlantic Ocean.

The waters around PEI are renowned for their abundance of plump seafood. The best oysters, known to connoisseurs the world over, are Malpeques, Raspberry Points and Colville Bays. But not just oysters thrive in these waters—they are also teeming with mussels, lob-



ster, clams and fish. You can enjoy the harvest of the sea by driving around the small island and visiting an oyster farm or on a lobster boat with Captain Perry Gotell of Tranquility Cove Adventures. An ex-lobster fisherman, Gotell now takes people out to experience catching lobsters and eating them fresh on the boat.

Though the ideal time to visit is between May and October, travellers in mid-September can visit the Prince Edward Island International Shellfish Festival: under a big, white tent near the ocean's edge, you can feast to your heart's content on fresh oysters, mussels, clams and lobster, pulled from the shining sea.



BASK IN THE BANYAS

The traditional bathhouses in MOSCOW now come updated with world-class facilities. Submit yourself to the birch-beating ritual, says SUKANYA A SHAH

Besides Bulgakov and ballet, banyas are amongst Russia's finest bestowals to the world. These 'social spas' or bathhouses that once served as closed-door boardrooms for the Russian high-brow are a hot wellness trend today. Creating thermal polarities with steam rooms and frigid water pools, the banyas thrill the nervous system into a state of newness.

Like the Turkish hammam, banyas are distinct in their use of birch leaves—lashed across one's back to promote blood circulation and relieve stress.

With separate enclosures for men and women, the regimen commences in a steam room, where small talk and tea are a given. A favourite of Naomi Campbell and Roman Abramovich, Sanduny Banya (*Sanduny.ru*) in Moscow is a 19th-century Russian icon replete with gilded frescoes, high ceilings and kitschy Rococo interiors—the locals call it the 'czar of bathhouses'. Don't worry if you don't belong to the *dvo-ryanstvo*—the specialised 'banya guide' will walk you through all the bathing etiquette a foreigner needs to know. >

The Sanduny Banya is frequented by Naomi Campbell



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