

Muskoka takes top vacation honours

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Michael Woods

Muskoka is in the international spotlight once again.

The region is Number 1 on *National Geographic Traveler* magazine's list of the 10 [best summer trips of 2011](#). It beat out popular destinations such as Patagonia, Argentina and the Azores in Portugal.

The magazine said Muskoka offers "an unplugged pace that's a world away from Canada's largest city."

"The 2,500-square-mile natural playground includes 8,699 miles of shoreline; 17 historic towns and villages; and countless waterfalls and lakes bordered by the granite peaks of Algonquin Provincial Park to the east and the 30,000 islands of Georgian Bay Islands National Park to the west," the story said.

Patagonia was the runner-up destination. Washington's San Juan Islands rounded out the top three.

National Geographic Traveler editor-in-chief Keith Bellows said Muskoka won the top spot because the region is true to itself.

"It's really got this sort of special depth — this resonance — that is immutable," he said. "We look for something that just feels like it's been there for a long time and stays true to what is."

Bellows, who's Canadian and spent summers growing up in Gravenhurst, Ont., said the magazine's editors looked at each destination's uniqueness, authenticity, and sense of payoff for visitors when creating the list.



The Muskoka Region has taken top spot in *National Geographic Traveler* Magazine's list of the 10 best summer trips for 2011. The magazine's editor-in-chief, Keith Bellows, says Muskoka won because the region is true to itself. (April 11, 2011)

STEVE RUSSELL/TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

“Canadians are always feeling like nobody appreciates them,” he added. “Muskoka is something to be truly, truly cherished.”

Huntsville hosted the G8 summit last summer. The RCMP is [investigating allegations](#) the Harper government failed to be accountable and transparent with Parliament about the administration of the \$50 million G8 Legacy Infrastructure Fund prior to last year’s summit.

David Powley, president of the Bracebridge Chamber of Commerce, said the new publicity is welcome following the G8 funding controversy.

“That Muskoka would be lumped in with all those other world-renowned destinations . . . helps people feel better about themselves,” Powley said.

Muskoka Tourism executive director Michael Lawley said tourism generates about \$476 million per year — 57 per cent of the district’s GDP.

He said the tourism office has received more attention than usual since the list was released, mostly from the United States.

“We know we’re going to generate some business from this,” he said. “It’s a terrific opportunity for us to get connected with people we ordinarily wouldn’t.”

For family trips, *National Geographic Traveler* recommends Peninsula Lake’s Pow-Wow Point Lodge, “a 91-year-old, all-inclusive resort featuring simple summer pleasures like campfires, canoeing and volleyball.”

Lodge owner Doug Howell said he’s already seen an increase in traffic.

“We have people just driving in off the highway who are aware of (the story) and coming to see what we’re all about.”

National Geographic's 10 best trips of summer 2011

1. Muskoka Cottage Country
2. Patagonia, Argentina
3. San Juan Islands, Washington
4. Minneapolis, Minnesota

5. Glacier Bay National Park, Alaska

6. Cardiff, Wales

7. Stockholm Archipelago, Sweden

8. Azores, Portugal

9. Roatan, Honduras

10. Istria, Croatia