

Freshwater Dunes by Day, Cellar Doors by Dusk — A 3-Day Prince Edward County Road Trip

Prince Edward County sits on an island-like peninsula jutting into Lake Ontario about two and a half hours east of Toronto, with more than 40 wineries packed into a county smaller than most American counties and one of the largest freshwater dune systems in the world at its southern tip. This three-day self-drive loop runs from the dune beaches of Sandbanks Provincial Park through the backroads wine route around Hillier and Wellington, with a free government ferry and a lighthouse lookout along the way. A real rental car, real wineries, and 2026 prices for every stop.

DURATION

3 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

June – September

Summer brings warm water for swimming at Sandbanks and the fullest slate of winery patios and open tasting rooms; September and early October add harvest events and fall color with thinner crowds, while many wineries and the Glenora ferry reduce hours or close entirely from late October through April.

FROM

\$420 CAD / person

for 2 people, incl. 2 nights at a Wellington inn, a one-day Sandbanks vehicle permit, tastings at 2 wineries, and a cheese-factory stop (excl. the rental car itself, gas, and most meals)

Day 1

Toronto to Sandbanks

A straightforward drive east off the 401 into dune country, with the afternoon reserved for the beach.

Self-Drive — Toronto to Picton

~200 km / ~2.5 hrs · self-drive via Hwy 401 & Hwy 49

The 401 carries most of the distance east before Highway 49 cuts south into the County itself; the drive crosses onto the peninsula over the Norris Whitney Bridge at Belleville, a clear signal the landscape is about to change.

Lunch — Base31 Food Hall, Picton

~1 hr · ~\$15–20 CAD/person

A converted World War II air force base on the edge of Picton now holds a rotating lineup of food stalls and a bakery — an easy, casual first stop after the drive in.

Sandbanks Provincial Park

~3 hrs · day-use vehicle permit from \$21.50 CAD (book ahead online)

Home to one of the largest freshwater baymouth dune systems in the world, with three beaches — Sandbanks, Outlet, and Dunes — backed by dunes up to 25 meters high; Ontario Parks now requires a reserved, timed vehicle permit for summer weekends, so booking ahead online is worth doing before you leave home.

Sandbanks Provincial Park · ontarioparks.com/park/sandbanks

Hotel Check-In — The Drake Devonshire Inn, Wellington

from \$320 CAD/night, for 2 people

A converted 19th-century foundry on the shore of Lake Ontario in downtown Wellington, now a design-forward boutique inn with a lakefront pool deck, art gallery, and one of the County's best-regarded restaurants on site.

The Drake Devonshire Inn · drakedevonshire.ca

Dinner — The Drake Devonshire Dining Room

~1.5 hrs · ~\$40–55 CAD/person

A lake-view dining room built around Ontario produce and seafood, with a wood-fired oven and a wine list drawn heavily from the County's own vineyards — reservations recommended, especially on summer weekends.

Day 2

The Wine Route

A self-drive loop through the County's backroads wine country, with a cheese factory and a ferry lookout on the way back.

Norman Hardie Winery & Vineyard, Wellington

~1 hr, tastings by the glass or flight · from \$10 CAD

One of the County's best-known names, built around cool-climate Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grown in limestone-rich soil close to Lake Ontario; the winery's wood-fired pizza patio is a popular lunch stop in its own right.

Norman Hardie Winery & Vineyard · normanhardie.com

Self-Drive — Wellington to Hillier Wine Country

~12 km / ~15 min · self-drive via County Rd 1 & Danforth Rd

A short hop onto the gravel and backroad lanes of the Hillier appellation, the densest concentration of wineries in the County, mapped loosely around the shared limestone bedrock that defines the region's wine character.

Closson Chase Vineyards, Hillier

~45 min, tastings by appointment or walk-in · from \$15 CAD

A small-production estate focused on Burgundian-style Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from vines planted directly into the County's limestone, with a rustic post-and-beam tasting room overlooking the vineyard rows.

Closson Chase Vineyards · clossonchase.com

Black River Cheese Co., Milford

~30 min, self-guided · samples free, cheese by weight

A long-running local cheesemaker and farm store known for its curds and aged cheddars, with free samples at the counter and a good stop to build a picnic for the ferry lookout ahead.

Black River Cheese Co. · blackrivercheese.com

Glenora Ferry & Lake on the Mountain

~1 hr round trip · ferry free, lookout free

A free, cable-guided government ferry crosses the Bay of Quinte in about seven minutes at Glenora; just above the landing, Lake on the Mountain Provincial Park overlooks both the ferry crossing and a small, oddly elevated lake whose water source remains a local mystery.

Dinner — Angeline's Inn, Bloomfield

~1.5 hrs · ~\$30–40 CAD/person

A restored 19th-century inn in the village of Bloomfield with a well-regarded dining room built around Ontario ingredients and a long County wine list — a favorite among locals for a special dinner.

Angeline's Inn · angelinesinn.com

Day 3

Lighthouses & the Drive Home

One last shoreline lookout and a waterfront brunch before the self-drive back to Toronto.

Self-Drive to Point Petre

~25 km / ~30 min · self-drive via County Rd 10 & Petre Rd

A quiet backroad drive to the County's southernmost tip, past open farmland and the wind turbines of the Point Petre peninsula, with a decommissioned 1833 lighthouse marking one of Lake Ontario's least-visited corners.

Brunch — Waupoos Estates Winery

~1.5 hrs · ~\$25–35 CAD/person

One of the County's oldest wineries, with a restaurant terrace overlooking the vineyard and the Waupoos Islands in Lake Ontario — a scenic last stop for brunch and a final tasting before the drive home.

Waupoos Estates Winery · waupooswinery.com

Self-Drive — Prince Edward County to Toronto

~210 km / ~2.5–3 hrs · self-drive via Hwy 49 & Hwy 401

The same route in reverse, back over the Norris Whitney Bridge and onto the 401 west; Sunday afternoons can add traffic near the Greater Toronto Area, so building in the extra half hour is worth it.

Prices and hours are researched at time of writing and may change — reconfirm directly with each business before you travel. · i-journey.com