

Nova Scotia

Ocean Playground of Canada...

Text by Svetlana Murashkina, PhD
Photos by Andrey Biryukin, PhD, Ingo Volmer and Svetlana Murashkina

I can not stop feeling, that I am at the White Sea in the northern part of Russia. Mirror of blue water, islands and islets, bays and small bays. Clear water, birches along the shores. The difference becomes clear when you step out to the road. Good asphalt, bright yellow marking lines. What else strikes my eyes – everywhere ashore there are placed, as if by a landscape designer, dry tree sculptures, decorated with algae. I can not understand, why there are so many dry trees? Then, the reason comes to my mind: nobody makes a camp fire here on shore at this time of year, that's why dry branches are of no use. Environmental rules are very strict, and caution is at a high level. Nobody will do harm to the lobsters underwater, and licenses for lobsters take into account every claw. Meadows with fields of flowers and lots of strawberries are everywhere...

Where did you dive this summer? If a person is satisfied with the brief answer, "In Canada," that means the person probably missed all his or her grade school geography lessons. Canada is a country of real contrasts. It is bath a densely inhabited strip of land along the

US border with huge metropolitan centers such as Montreal and Toronto, where there are sky-scrappers and big businesses, as well as a vast country of wilderness territories in the north stretching out along the coastline.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NOVA SCOTIA TOURISM & CULTURE



ABOVE: A diver explores a wreck on the coast of Nova Scotia
LEFT: Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada



Nova Scotia

Vollmer's Island Paradise Resort

The target of our trip is New Scotland, Cape Breton and Janvrin Island near Isle Madame.

"Vollmer's Paradise", a modest name given by its owners to their "estate", is about a three-hour drive from the province's capital, Halifax, where the international shipping port and airport are situated.

Nova Scotia is one of ten Canadian provinces. Every territory, like Quebec or Newfoundland, is a separate state with its own specific nature, history and culture, "national features", flag and slogan. Nova Scotia's slogan is "Canadian Ocean Playground". Here, all the life is connected with the ocean.

The history of New Scotland is a history of British-French interaction and foreign relations. The British and French heritage is reflected in the traditions, music, art and cuisine of the area. It is the place where Acadiens settled, Canadian French. It is here, at Cape Breton, that the World Acadian Festival took place this summer.

But the dive center we are aiming for is, in fact, German. By all accounts, it really is, "Alles in ordnung", which in English means "everything is in order", and it's great.

Creature comforts

Suddenly, I open my eyes in the darkness of my room. And see... stars. Various thoughts come: Did I dive too much? Is the roof broken? And only after staring at the darkness and getting used to it did I realize that the stars were fluorescent pieces of smooth material stuck just over my cosy wooden bed.

In each house of the resort, eve-

rything is handmade for human comfort by a man. And the name of the man is Arthur Vollmer.

The stars are also made by Arthur who created this hospitable resort on a glorious plot of land with his own hands. Reaching 75 this spring, Arthur is an energetic German carpenter, collector and inventor. His family settled here in Nova Scotia in 1988.

Before they



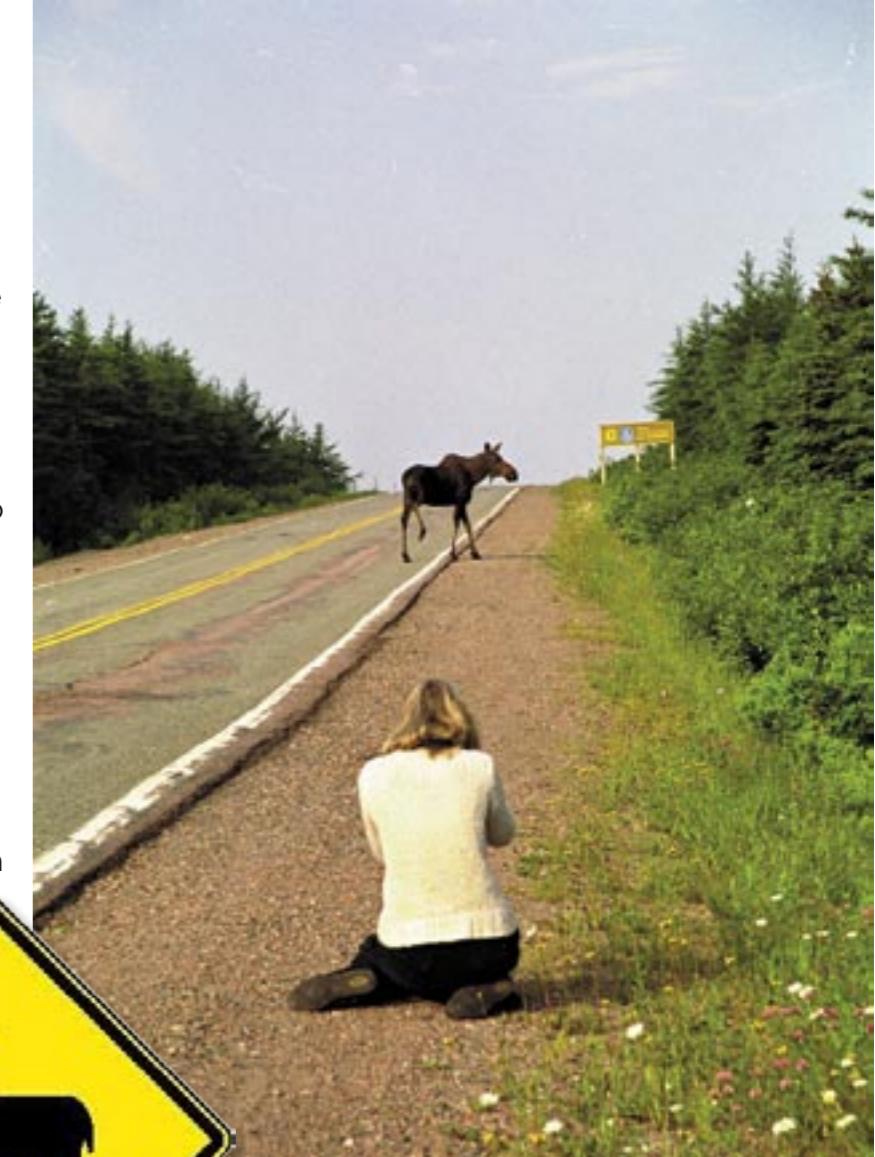
moved area permanently, the family came to spend their vacations in Nova Scotia and fell in love with the nature, the lifestyle, which was different from the European way of life, even though there was no time to be bored especially during the summer high season.

Six family houses are situated on the territory, hidden behind the trees, so you would scarcely see them until you came across them. Everything is placed very rationally in the resort.

The fisherman's house is on the shore. There is a club-house, dive

center, repair shop and a small restaurant where Maria, Arthur's wife, will serve you with yellow-like sun-pumpkin soup, or grilled fresh trout. Your salad plate will certainly be decorated with big strawberries.

In the houses, which can host up to 17 people at a time, there are all the modern conveniences arranged within a setting that gives one the illusion that one is deep in a forest.



LEFT: The beautiful coastline of Nova Scotia
TOP RIGHT: A moose crossing



CAPE BRETON NATIONAL PARK

features



A diver is enveloped by thick fronds of seaweed

TOP RIGHT: Speedy transport for divers
INSET: Divers prepare for a dive on location
BOTTOM RIGHT: Top speed in a rib

There are two beds, a shower, a toilet and a small kitchen. In the club house, there is a round table, a home library with lots of underwater books and literature, and a screen.

Our hosts are pro-active. In the beginning of the 90s, upon Arthur Vollmer's initiative, a local organization working for pollution control was created. The group declared that their mission was to clean the island. Then, they collected waste, rubbish and organized its removal



for recycling. They promoted the use of cotton shopping bags instead of plastic ones. They got waste containers for sorting rubbish (paper, soft plastics and metals) placed in the center of the community.

For all their hard work, the organization received recognition and approval from the public and governmental environmental agencies. Now, all this positive energy the group generates is being directed mainly in creating and maintaining a real paradise for nature lovers and divers in this corner of the world.

The dive center

The dive center is the beloved child of Ingo Vollmer. He heads the technical



dive school, ANDI Germany, and is the owner of the dive center in Marlin. Ingo spends all his summer seasons in Canada organizing dive tours in Nova Scotia and research expeditions to remote places on the Eastern shores of

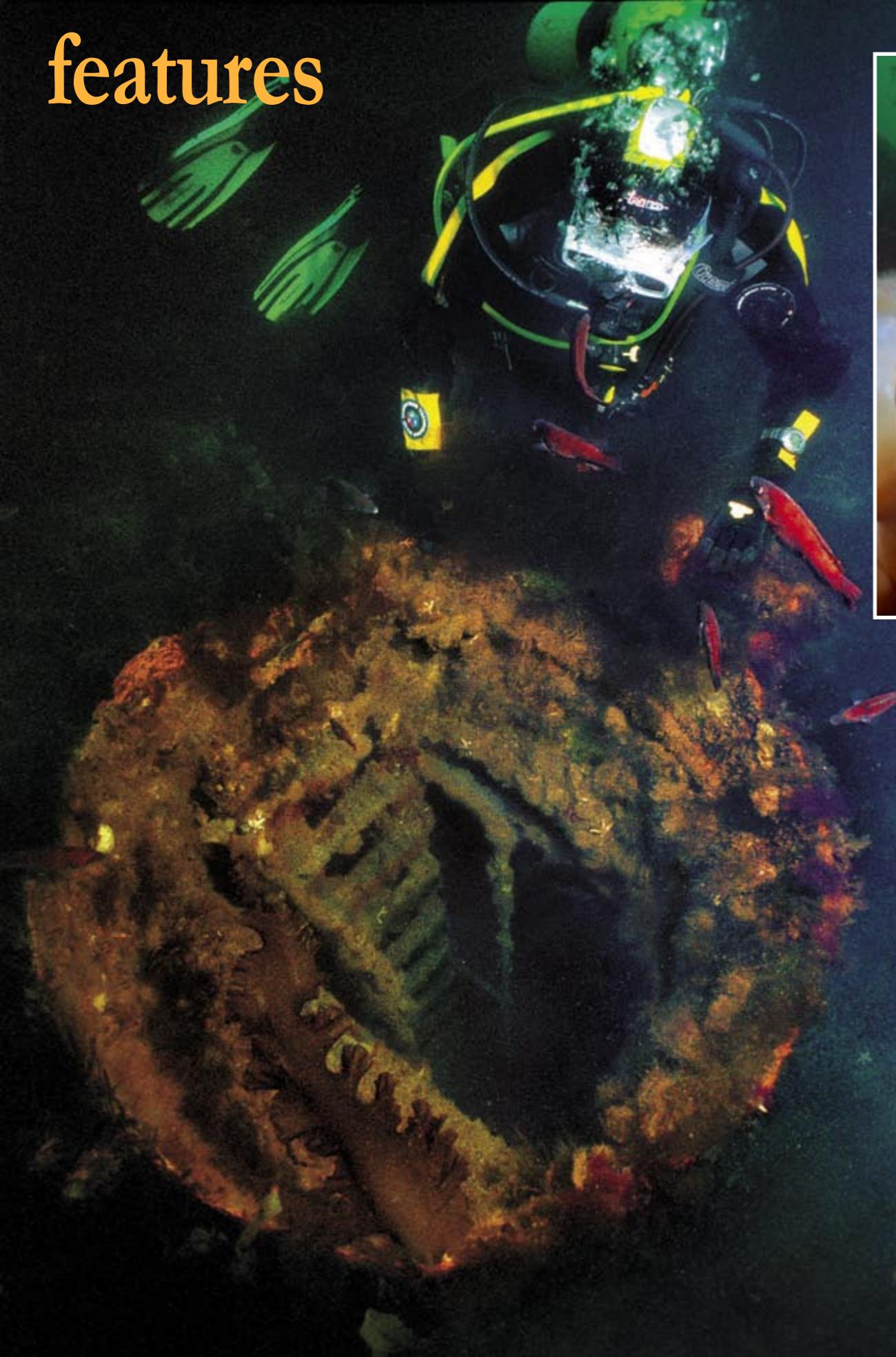
Canada.

I am strongly convinced that the main asset in every business, dive centers included, is atmosphere. It is created by the hosts, first of all, and the guests, that very often become regular customers.

Here, everything is punctual and accurate in the traditional German manner.



features



A diver explores an open hatch of a wreck



Soft corals and sea lilies decorate the surfaces of a wreck

If we plan to start at 9:00 am, we start at 9:00 am, and not at 9:05. Dinner is at 7:00—that means exactly at 7:00. Such accuracy on the part of the hosts is very attractive to tourists and guests visit this place many times.

Canadians and Americans, driving their own or rented cars, like to be on the road, spend 2-3 days in a spot, dive several times, and drive on to the next location. Europeans also visit the area. They stay for 2-3 weeks, enjoying both diving and nature walking tours, as an escape from city stress.

Mobile phones do not work on every spot of the territory, only in the open sea. So, in the evenings, the club house is a hub of multi-national companies meeting, speaking different languages.

We were at the dive resort at the same time as the editor-in-chief of *Tauchen*, the largest German dive magazine, and this man's choice is known to be reliable. We're talking about his choice in diving, of course.

Diving

We head out to sea on the dive boat

Tury. *Tury* is a work horse, hosting 12 passengers a trip, averaging a speed of 8 knots with a maximum speed of 12 knots. There are two tanks for everyone on board as well as a portable compressor, which is brought along so we can reach the far islands and stay overnight there.

The dive center also has a speed boat, a rib with a huge engine, getting up to 30 knots. It is Ingo's favorite toy. The rib brings divers to the most remote dive sites within 40 minutes.

We reach the site. When the engine stops, nothing artificial breaks the silence: only the splash of waves and the sounds of birds. We can see a spray of water from time to time port side. It is a whale passing by on its journey to favourite feeding grounds. Now, the whale shows the curve of a large back. At starboard, a huge well-fed gull sits observing.

The main impression I got from the dive was a strong affiliation with nature.



Divers investigate a wreck site off the shores of Nova Scotia

Walls reach down to deep depths. They are covered with soft corals, bold free lobsters and crabs, and sea stars of various sizes, shapes and colors.

The water is cold, 5-10° C. In the middle of summer, water temperatures warm to 13-15 degrees, but this benefit is accompanied by a decline in visibility. So, it is not the worse place for dry-suit diving.

I descend to the bottom. At about 20 meters, everything is as usual, green calming water, brown kelp forest. Suddenly, a 1.5m seal takes wing just under my feet. He is gray, with dark spots, a nice face and a moustache. I have never ever seen seals underwater

Nova Scotia

features



THIS PAGE: Scenes from a wreck dive where fish are bold and coral life is abundant

Nova Scotia

before this moment.

My cameramen is occupied with his lenses... I am certain that the animal will go away, and we will miss the opportunity to capture images of the seal. Gone. Suddenly, the seal returns and curiously models just in front of the camera. He makes one round after another.

In the near distance is a female seal with her baby. They are not that curious, staying safely aside, but the father-seal looks right into the camera lense. I watch the seal and cameraman eyeing one another. They look like twin-brothers.

Our hosts listen to my delightful story about the first seal in my life with patience; seals are common here, so I am sure it's not the first time they've heard a seal story from an excited diver.

There are wrecks here too. The



Liberian tanker, Arrow, which sunk in 1970, and the Norwegian cargo ship, *Balein*. They were covered with algae and soft corals, and inhabited by numerous small fishes, each one trying to get a look at me, coming right up to my mask.

Wilderness with a humane face

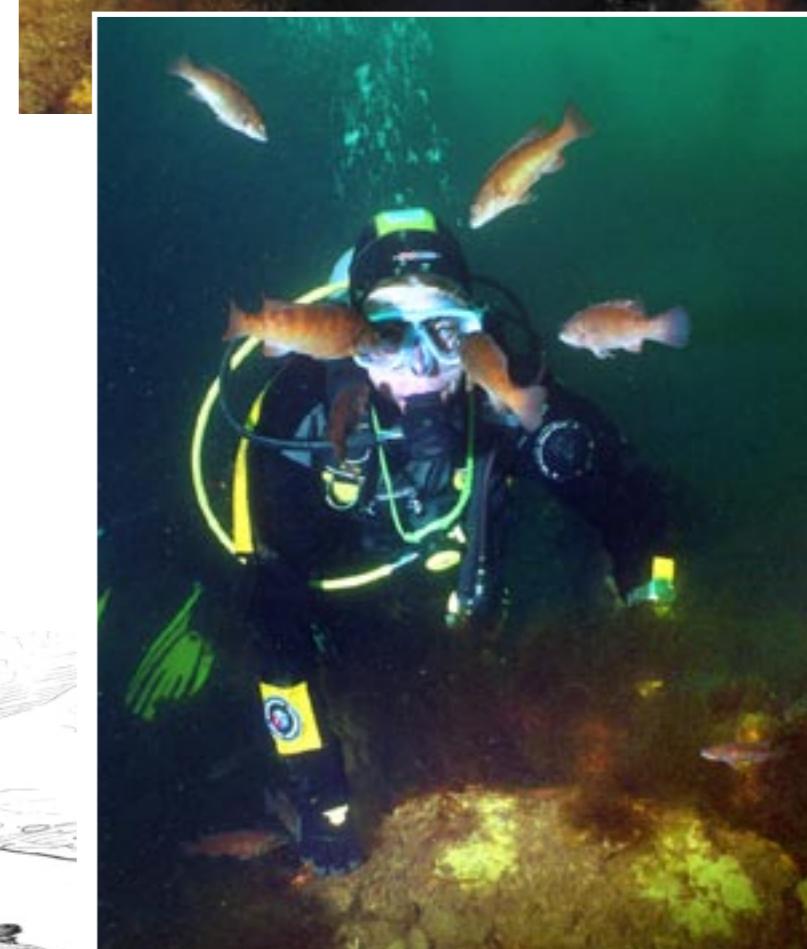
Canadians are very proud of their "wilderness" and natural environment, and they should be. A must-see side trip for tourists traveling across Nova Scotia is Cabot Trail, a scenic road that lies in the territory of Cape Breton National Park.

Here, you will see moose and deer, red fox, proud white-headed eagles, and Canadian geese. You can watch whales from the shore. Throughout Nova Scotia flow clean salmon rivers. All this is maintained in a natural state. Nature is preserved and protected by the state.

Trails for hikers are marked with special signs identifying scenic views and benches for rest and picturesque bridges over streams. Perhaps, this is the right way to treat nature.

So, when you go to Nova Scotia, bring along a good dry suit and good underwaer, and don't forget your hiking boots!

For more information about Vollmer's Island Paradise in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada, please visit: www.vipilodge.com ■



LEFT: Gray seal. Image courtesy of NOAA Image Library

fact file

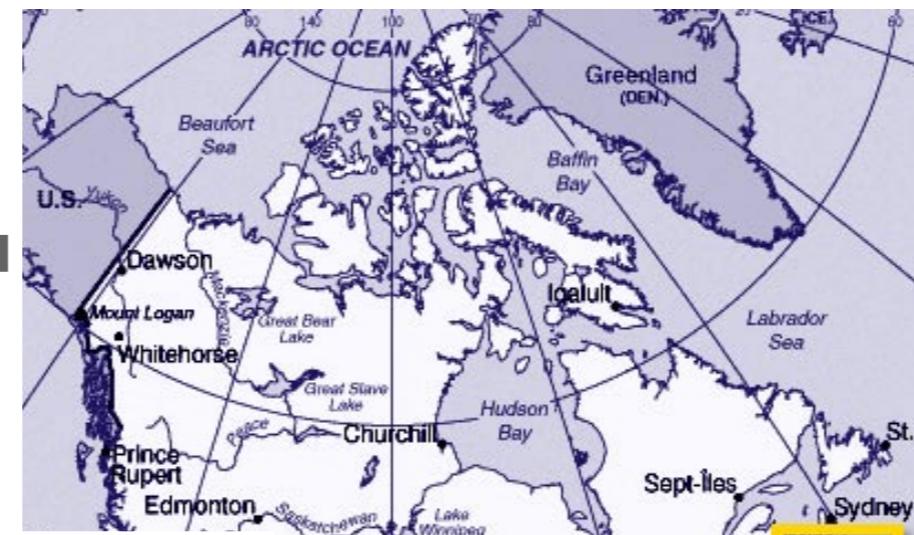
Nova Scotia, Canada



History Canada is a country of rich natural resources and vast distances. In 1867, Canada became a self-governing territory while retaining its relationship with the British crown. The country has developed economically and technologically in parallel with its southern neighbor along an unfortified border, the United States. After a decade of budget cuts, the country's greatest political issues are improving education and health care services. Recently, the issue of reconciling Quebec's francophone heritage with the rest of the country's population which is anglophone, has receded after a referendum held by the Quebec government failed to pass in 1995.

Government A parliamentary democracy and a federation that is also a constitutional monarchy

Geography Located on the northern half of the North American continent, Canada is bordered by three oceans: the North Atlantic Ocean on the east and the North Pacific Ocean on the west, as well as the Arctic Ocean to the north. After Russia, Canada is the second largest country in the world. It has a strategic position between Russia and the US on the north polar route; about 90% of Canadians are concentrated in the area within 160 km of the border with the US. Terrain: wide plains with mountains in the west and lowlands in the southeast; Natural resources: iron ore, nickel, zinc, copper, gold, lead, molybdenum, potash, diamonds, silver, fish, timber, wildlife, coal, petroleum, natural gas, hydropower; Natural hazards: continuous permafrost in north is a



serious obstacle to development; as a result of the mixing of air masses from the Arctic, Pacific, and North American interior, cyclonic storms form east of the Rocky Mountains and produce most of the country's rain and snow east of the mountains.

Economy Canada closely resembles the US in its market-oriented economic system, pattern of production, and high living standards. It is an affluent, high-tech industrial society. Agriculture: wheat, barley, oilseed, tobacco, fruits, vegetables; dairy products; forest products; fish; Industries: transportation equipment, chemicals, processed and unprocessed minerals, food products; wood and paper products; fish products, petroleum and natural gas.

Climate Varies from temperate in the south to subarctic and arctic in the north

Population 32,507,874 (July 2004 est.)
Ethnicity: British Isles origin 28%, French origin 23%, other European 15%, Amerindian 2%,

other, mostly Asian, African, Arab 6%, mixed background 26%; Religions: Roman Catholic 46%, Protestant 36%, other 18%

Currency Canadian dollar (CAD) Exchange rate: 1 CAD = \$.82 USD / € .63 EURO

Language English 59.3% (official), French 23.2% (official), other 17.5%

Web sites

Cape Breton National Park

www.pc.gc.ca

Vollmers Island Paradise Resort

vipilodge.com

Nova Scotia Tourism

novascotia.com

Deco Chamber

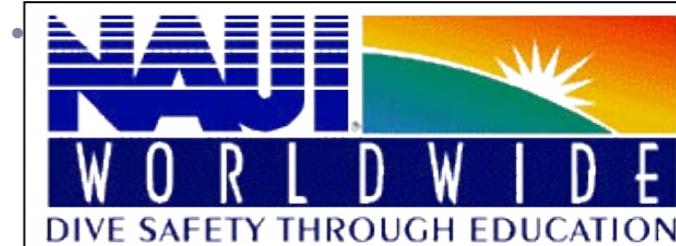
Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre

Victoria General Site

1278 Tower Road, Victoria

Nova Scotia, B3H 2Y9

(902)473-2220 or (902)473-2251 ■



NAUI Products and Services Featured in International Dive Shows

- Also Participating in Regional Shows Throughout United States
- NAUI announced that its award-winning product line and new services will be featured in international dive shows throughout 2006.
- Along with NAUI's full line of training products and materials, show visitors can learn about the many ways NAUI can help expand your dive operations through business development programs, quality customer support and a comprehensive range of training programs.

NAUI has or will participate in the following events in 2006:

- Paris Dive Show - Paris, France (13-16 January)
- Düsseldorf Boat Show - Düsseldorf, Germany (21 - 29 January)
- Duikvaker - Utrecht, Netherlands (3-5 February)
- Moscow Global Expo 2006 - Moscow, Russia (16-19 February)
- EudiShow - Genoa, Italy (10-13 March)
- London International Dive Show - London, UK (1-2 April)
- Asian Dive Expo 2006 - Singapore (21-23 April)
- National Boat Show - Johannesburg, South Africa (18-20 August)
- China Dive Expo 2006 - Shanghai, China (September)
- Dive 2006 - Birmingham, UK (14-15 October)
- DEMA Show 2006 - Orlando, FL (8-11 November)

NAUI will also be participating in many U.S. regional trade and consumer shows throughout the year, including:

- Our World Underwater - Chicago, IL (24-26 February)
- Boston Sea Rovers - Boston, MA (4-6 March)
- Beneath The Sea - Secaucus, NJ (24-26 March)
- Ocean Fest - Ft. Lauderdale, FL (21-23 April)
- Northwest Treasure Hunt - Tacoma, WA (13 May)
- Scuba Show 2006 - Long Beach, CA (24-25 June)

- Plan to visit the booth at each of these shows to catch up on the latest news, view new products, get together with your fellow members or join the NAUI team!