



FAMOUS SHIPWRECKS BENEATH CANADIAN WAVES

In a nation that stretches from coast to coast, it's no surprise that Canada's the resting place of countless shipwrecks. Many of these ships travelled from Europe to discover the New World. They were full of hopeful immigrants in search of brighter futures.

"These shipwrecks evoke images of adventure, sunken treasure and heroism. They capture our imagination," says Terry Dwyer, shipwreck hunter and author. As a teenager, he watched Jacques Cousteau's weekly TV show and became captivated with the underwater world.



"Shipwrecks have always fascinated me. They're the reason I continue to scuba dive 40 years later...They happen mostly because of weather and the captains' unfamiliarity with shorelines," says Terry. "The waters off Nova Scotia alone house about 10,000 shipwrecks."

"We're finding wrecks today because of technology that didn't exist even 20 years ago," states Terry. "For instance, scuba diving became accessible to the public in the 1940s. That's when shipwreck hunting was born. Before that, we knew very little about these ships."

Let's look at some famous wrecks that surround our shores, rest in our lakes and line our rivers.

S.S. EDMUND FITZGERALD

“The lake, it is said, never gives up her dead...” — *Gordon Lightfoot*

The freighter *S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald* was the largest ship on the Great Lakes in its day. It sank off the coast of Sault Ste. Marie in Lake Superior on November 10, 1975. Succumbing to a winter storm, the boat took the lives of the entire 29-person crew. Gordon Lightfoot’s famous song, *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*, immortalized the ship and its fateful journey.

Interesting fact: The Captain, Ernest McSorley (who was in charge on the night of the wreck), was on his last voyage before retirement.



RMS EMPRESS OF IRELAND

“Life’s roughest storms prove the strength of our anchors.” — *Unknown*

This ocean liner sank in the Saint Lawrence River in 1914 after colliding with a Norwegian coal ship. The *RMS Empress of Ireland* sank in 14 minutes, claiming the lives of more than 1,000 people. In 1999, the wreck was added to Canada’s list of historic sites. The ship’s proud history included carrying over 100,000 immigrants to Canada in the early 20th century.

Terry says that many people are connected to shipwrecks because their relatives emigrated from Ireland to Canada; many of these ships sank off the coast of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. These boats carried people trying to make it to places like Quebec, but bad weather, or unsafe and overcrowded conditions, challenged their dreams.

Interesting fact: The federal government estimates about one in 35 Canadians today can trace an ancestor to the *RMS Empress of Ireland*.¹



HMS EREBUS AND HMS TERROR

“We are tied to the ocean.” — *John F. Kennedy*

In 1845, naval officer and arctic explorer Sir John Franklin led an expedition to navigate the Northwest Passage—the sea route over the top of North America. The HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* became ice-bound and the crew abandoned ship. They walked in search of shelter, but didn’t survive the harsh climate. This lost expedition is the subject of *The Terror*, a fictionalized TV series.

Dozens of expeditions searched for the missing ships over the years. Finally, in 2014, Parks Canada archaeologists discovered the HMS *Erebus*. Two years later, the Arctic Research Foundation found the HMS *Terror* in Nunavut’s Terror Bay.

Interesting fact: Sammy Kogvik, an Inuit hunter and Canadian Ranger, was part of the Arctic Research Foundation team. He recalled that, years earlier, he’d seen what appeared to be a mast jutting from the ice. With this information, researchers located the HMS *Terror* in just two-and-a-half hours.

WHERE TO SEE MORE FAMOUS SHIPWRECKS

Canada's one of the best places in the world to see shipwrecks. "People come from all over the globe because we have so many shipwrecks, and they're lying in very clear water," says Terry.

Canada's rich maritime history has something for everyone to explore.

THE ROBERT KERR

Thetis Island, British Columbia

The *Robert Kerr* rests near Thetis Island in 15 metres of water and is a popular dive site. In 1911, this 190-foot barque was running behind a towboat when it struck a reef just north of the island. Once the coal was removed, the ship was abandoned. In 1886, it became known as "the ship that saved Vancouver." Residents boarded the vessel to escape a fire that destroyed much of the city.



THE SS ATLANTIC HERITAGE PARK

Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia

If you'd rather stay on dry land, visit the S.S. Atlantic Heritage Park and Interpretation Centre in Terence Bay. It commemorates the *S.S. Atlantic*, a luxury steamship that sank April 1, 1873 off the coast of Lower Prospect. Only 390 of the 952 passengers survived. Look for many important landmarks at the park, including artifacts from the ship and its anchor.

SWEEPSTAKES

Tobermory, Ontario

The schooner *Sweepstakes* lies at the bottom of Big Tub Harbour in about seven metres of water. It was hauling coal on Lake Huron in 1885 when it was damaged by rocks. *Sweepstakes* was towed into harbour, but sank while awaiting repairs. The ship is open for viewing by divers, snorkellers and boat tourers, and you can even see it from shore.

Shipwrecks and lost voyages conjure up images of mystery and discovery. Canada is one of the best in the world to let your imagination float away with you. For more information, visit <http://www.wreckhunter.ca/>

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