

Confederation Bridge



In 1873, when the people on Prince Edward Island voted to join Canadian Confederation they were promised a year-round link to the main land by the federal government. For 124 years that link was provided by a ferry service which ran across the Northumberland Strait between PEI and New Brunswick. As the population grew and tourism to the island increased, the cost of providing ferry service also increased. There were other problems too. In the winter high winds blow through the Strait and it is cold enough for thick ice to form on the water. Ferries were often delayed or canceled due to dangerous weather or ice conditions, stranding travelers on one side of the Strait or the other.

In June 1997, the ferries were finally replaced by a permanent link, the Confederation Bridge. The bridge is one of the most challenging engineering projects ever built. Its design and construction were completed over 4 years by more than 2000 people. The final structure is massive. It is nearly 12.9 kilometers long - about the length of 117 football fields. It weighs almost 3.5 billion kilograms. If the average person weighs about 70 kilograms (155 lbs) the bridge is the equivalent of 50,000,000 people - more than one and a half times the population of Canada!

The Confederation Bridge actually consists of 65 separate sections which were each built on land and then moved into precise positions by a satellite-guided floating crane. It is designed to last for 100 years withstanding the driving winds and crushing ice of the Strait and even impacts with passing ships. At the same time the bridge was designed to have little environmental impact on the ecosystems within and surrounding the Strait.

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