

# The Best of Newfoundland & Labrador

You've done the Florida sun, the European tour, the Caribbean cruise, and the all-inclusive resort, but what you really want is something different. You want to experience something natural and untamed, to relax and rejuvenate without resorting to laziness. You want to create your own vacation memories, not reenact someone else's itinerary. You yearn for a place unlike any other, somewhere that hasn't been sanitized and packaged for official tourist consumption. Well, now you've found it: Newfoundland and Labrador, the Far East of the Western world.

Here, in Canada's youngest and most easterly province, a world of unique adventures awaits. What's around the next bend in the highway? Could it be a picturesque fishing village? A breaching humpback? A glistening iceberg? A friendly little cafe serving cod tongues? There's no script or schedule here, so you never know what you'll find when you start to explore. The key word here is "explore"—some of your most treasured memories will be found on the roads less traveled.

The rustic majesty that is Newfoundland and Labrador can be summed up in two words: "people" and "place." Both are unforgettable. The inhabitants of this isolated locale are as real as it gets. They are unpretentious, thoughtful, and witty. They'll charm you with their accents and their generous spirit. Though their lifestyle is neither opulent nor lavish, they will never hesitate to help a person in need. It comes from living in a harsh environment, where a helping hand can make the difference between survival and some other, ugly, alternative.

Newfoundland and Labrador's landscape and its animal inhabitants are equally remarkable. There are fjords and mountain vistas of stunning beauty. Places where sky meets horizon in blazing color, and where stands of spruce flow in an evergreen sea. Here, salmon launch themselves against the current and traffic slows for road-hopping rabbits. It is a place where howling winds have blown trains off their tracks and arctic air chills your backbone. As any local will tell you, this is the most blessedly cursed union of land, sea, air, and sky on creation. Come here once, and you'll have a perpetual longing to return.

Up until the last decade, Newfoundland was virtually undiscovered as a tourist destination. Even most Canadians hadn't been to "the Rock." But over the past 10 years, the province has put great effort into promoting itself throughout North America and on the global stage. Newfoundland and Labrador has revealed itself to the world as an exciting, unique, and even trendy destination.

So, be patient as you make your way throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, understanding that tourism is a new industry for the province and that services are not as abundant as they are in certain other locales. And really, isn't that why you're coming here in the first place?

**Note:** The following pages are designed to give you a quick overview of the best Newfoundland and Labrador has to offer. Wherever possible, I have included at least one attraction per category for every region of the province.

## 1 THE BEST TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

- **Walk the streets of downtown St. John's:** St. John's is one of the most interesting and visually exciting cities I've ever been to. The downtown core is relatively compact, and many of the top sights can be found within a 4-block radius of the harbor. See chapter 5.
- **Stand on top of Signal Hill:** You literally have a city at your feet when you stand at the base of Cabot Tower (walk around the tower to the other side, and you'll be gazing down at the broad expanse of the Atlantic Ocean). It's one of those must-see pilgrimages for any visitor to the capital city, and even for a good many local residents. See chapter 5, p. 99.
- **Watch the sun come up at Cape Spear:** On this, the most easterly point in North America, a spectacular sunrise, swirling surf, and picturesque lighthouse make Cape Spear the perfect location for an unforgettable marriage proposal. Find your inner romantic; see chapter 5, p. 100.
- **Dance the night away on George Street:** With the most pubs per capita in North America, the fun continues long after the sun has set in St. John's. There's something for everyone on George Street (rap, jazz, traditional, contemporary, and more). Find your favorite nighttime hot spot in "St. John's After Dark," in chapter 5.
- **Get sprayed by the Spout:** This natural geyser shoots saltwater more than 60m (197 ft.) into the air. You'll be wet, cold, and tired by the time you get there . . . and you won't even notice. You'll be too awestruck by every step along the spectacular East Coast Trail. For directions, see chapter 6, p. 129.
- **Experience an active archaeological dig at the Colony of Avalon:** Walk the oldest cobblestone street in North

America and see artifacts from a 16th-century settlement. You'll learn about ancient battles for property ownership and skirmishes with marauding privaters. See chapter 6, p. 117.

- **Enjoy a bird's-eye view of Bird Rock:** After a short walk across tundra, you'll feel like you've reached the end of the world on that cliff overlooking Bird Rock at **Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve**. Imagine gazing into the eyes of thousands of squawking gannets nearly within arm's reach! See chapter 6, p. 122.
- **Dig into history at Bell Island:** It's just a 30-minute boat ride from Portugal Cove, but it's a giant step back in time when you explore the abandoned iron-ore mines of Bell Island. Or step back even farther, with a scuba-diving expedition to the wreckage of sunken ships that surround the island's perimeter. Find out how you can organize your own Bell Island adventure in chapter 6, p. 128.
- **Get carried away by Rising Tide:** Here's professional theater in both indoor and outdoor venues, in the heart of Newfoundland's most visually historical community, Trinity. Whether it's the comedic characters of the New Founde Lande Trinity Pageant or the haunting tragedy of a more serious dramatic production, you're sure to be impressed by the Rising Tide theater company. For details, see chapter 7, p. 138.
- **Light up your day with a trip to the Cape Bonavista Lighthouse:** This step back in time is informative, introspective, and breathtakingly beautiful. Inside, you'll be greeted by costumed interpreters and a realistic portrayal of life as it once was for the lighthouse keeper and his family. Outside, you'll be

equally enraptured by the rocky coastline and flowing seascape. See chapter 7, p. 141.

- **Chart a course for the North Atlantic Aviation Museum:** At the town of Gander, experience local aviation history, as depicted through storyboards, scale model displays, and restored aircraft. And if you've ever dreamed of becoming a pilot, you can move a step closer to that dream when you park yourself in the cockpit of a DC-38. See chapter 8, p. 163.
- **Cruise the South Coast:** Visit the most isolated communities on the island portion of the province. These gems of outpost perfection are accessible only by ferry. They might not have pavement, but they're also free of traffic jams and road rage. A ferry trip along the South Coast is the best way to get up close and personal with the best (people) and worst (isolation) of rural Newfoundland. See chapter 8, p. 172.
- **Visit the province's last pocket of French settlement:** The **Port au Port Peninsula** is the only place in the province where French displaces English as the native language. *Ici, on parle Français*. Language, however, is just one part of a larger cultural dynamic. Here, you'll find a more overt Roman Catholic heritage and a genuinely French *joie de vivre*—unique in a society of primarily English and Irish descent. See chapter 9, p. 179.
- **Cruise the fjords of Gros Morne:** A tour boat excursion across **Western Brook Pond** in Gros Morne National Park will be a highlight of your trip to Newfoundland and Labrador. You pass countless waterfalls and towering peaks, and feel at peace with nature. See chapter 9, p. 193.
- **Set sail on a Viking adventure:** Take your place at the oar onboard a replica Viking *knarr* with Viking Boat Tours. It's a full-fledged Viking-style oceangoing adventure: you can even dress in traditional garb for a more authentic experience. Still, I doubt the Vikings would have approved—only good, clean fun is allowed on this ship. For information on how to book your Nordic adventure, see chapter 9, p. 206.
- **Climb the lighthouse at Point Amour:** The rewards are well worth the effort. You'll get a spectacular view (including a bird's-eye view of some of the oldest fossils found in North America) and learn quite a bit about naval history and shipwrecks. Back at ground level, you can hike the HMS *Raleigh* Trail when you're done. See chapter 10, p. 214.
- **Enjoy an outdoor lunch at Ferryland:** Lighthouse Picnics will fill a basket full of goodies—including a blanket—to make your lunch on the grassy headland of this historic community memorable. See chapter 6, p. 117.

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## 2 THE BEST SPOTS FOR OBSERVING WILDLIFE & NATURE

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- **The Fluvarium:** This interesting facility within St. John's city limits is easily accessible to those using public transport and very convenient to campers next door in Pippy Park. The Fluvarium offers a firsthand look at the underwater world of brook trout and other creatures that inhabit Newfoundland's ponds and rivers. See chapter 5, p. 102.
- **See seals in action at the Ocean Sciences Centre:** It's the unofficial star of Logy Bay, an oceanfront research facility that has an outdoor seal tank. You'll

be entertained by the comical antics of the resident seals as they splash and dive in their own private pool. If you're lucky, you may even see them interacting with Centre staff—and being rewarded for their efforts with a tasty fish. See chapter 5, p. 103.

- **Route 10, The Irish Loop:** Head south of St. John's, and you'll find a number of the province's best nature attractions within close proximity. Out at **Witless Bay Ecological Reserve**, seabirds abound, numbering more than 2.5 million, including 520,000 Atlantic puffins. The waters are also full of playful humpback whales. The whales actually heave their massive bodies out of the water and snare mouthfuls of food during their descent. The reserve is accessible by boat tour. Meanwhile, back on land, a herd of caribou can often be seen from the highway near Trepassey, and if you're really lucky, you may be able to watch the humpbacks feeding off the beach at St. Vincent's. See chapter 6, p. 112.
- **Visit with local wildlife at Salmonier Nature Park:** At this retirement/recovery home for aging and wounded animals, you'll see moose, fox, hare, lynx, and more in their natural environment (or almost natural—the holding areas are securely fenced enclosures). The Nature Park is a pleasant walk and education expedition, combined with a rare opportunity to view reclusive animals. Best of all, no admission is charged. See chapter 6, p. 120.
- **Watch salmon return to their spawning grounds at the Salmonid Interpretation Centre:** Here, you'll get both a surface and underwater view of these homeward-bound fish as they make their annual against-the-current pilgrimage. See chapter 8, p. 170.
- **White-water raft with Rafting Newfoundland:** Your exhilarating ride through breathtaking scenery just might include passing a black bear or moose. You'll see the province in a way not possible from the highway. See chapter 8, p. 170.
- **Twillingate:** This is the place to be if you're thrilled by the sight of towering icebergs and gracious whales. Icebergs float by from May through July (they seem to linger a bit longer in the bay near Twillingate than they do elsewhere around the province). Humpback whales are in abundance from June through September. See chapter 8, p. 165.
- **Northern Peninsula:** Anyone looking for a moose is bound to spot one here. This remote and rugged part of northwestern Newfoundland is home to many of the province's 130,000 big, brown, beautiful creatures. You'll often see them on or along the highway at dusk or dawn, especially during the fall. See chapter 9, p. 195.
- **Sail amid floating glacial castles with Northland Discovery Boat Tours:** You'll marvel at the cracks and colors in 10,000-year-old icebergs while traveling alongside playful dolphins, whales, and seabirds in their natural environment. To learn how you can get a taste of Northland Discovery's unique eco-tourism adventure (not to mention the purest water on Earth), see chapter 9, p. 203.
- **Tablelands:** Students of geology already know that there's no better place to be than the island of Newfoundland, commonly known as the Rock. And there's no more spectacular example of the world's natural geological forces than this UNESCO World Heritage Site, where tremendous forces deep below the Earth's crust pushed upward 470 million years ago. See chapter 9, p. 192.
- **Gros Morne Adventures:** Guided sea kayaking tours through the sheltered waters of Bonne Bay give you a sea-level view of bald eagles, terns, and other wildlife. You'll be gliding through one

of the most scenic areas of the province: mountains, fjords, and glacial deposits are just a few of the features you'll encounter along your paddling adventure. See chapter 9, p. 194.

- **Pinware River Provincial Park:** Most of the Labrador Straits area is open, barren

land with just a few stands of tuckamore for color. Not here. In Pinware Park, you'll find a verdant spruce carpet in a sheltered valley, as well as abundant freshwater fish and extreme kayaking conditions (for experts only!). To learn more about the park, see chapter 10, p. 216.

### 3 THE BEST SCENIC DRIVES

- **Cape Spear Road:** Just a 15-minute drive south of St. John's, Cape Spear is the most easterly point in North America, a National Historic Site, and site of the Cape Spear Lighthouse. If you're enjoying the drive, continue a little farther south toward the scenic fishing village of Petty Harbour. It won't take you more than an hour to drive the complete circle from St. John's to Cape Spear—Petty Harbour—Goulds—Kilbride and back to St. John's. See "Exploring St. John's" in chapter 5.
- **Middle Cove to Pouch Cove** (pronounced "pooch cove"): In the opposite direction from Cape Spear and Petty Harbour are the close-knit communities of Logy Bay—Middle Cove—Outer Cove, Torbay, Flat Rock, and Pouch Cove (follow rtes. 30 and 20). There's an interesting contrast along the drive: Nestled in between the farmland and obviously rural lifestyle are some of the most prestigious properties on the island, evidence of the growing prosperity in this part of the province. See chapter 5.
- **Irish Loop:** This loop is a 4-hour round-trip drive through the heart of Newfoundland's Irish heritage and caribou country. Along the way, you'll see beautiful coastal communities beside a panorama of rugged shore and outport loveliness. Follow Route 10 south of St. John's. If you stay on the same route (the name changes to Rte. 90 about halfway), you'll be carried back to the capital city. See "Irish Loop" in chapter 6.
- **Baccalieu Trail:** The tiny outport communities that line the shores of this finger of the Avalon Peninsula between Trinity and Conception bays are simply beautiful. Routes 80 and 70 will take you to inviting communities such as Heart's Delight, Heart's Content, and Harbour Grace. But remember to get off the highway and drive right into the villages in order to truly enjoy the beauty. See "Baccalieu Trail" in chapter 6.
- **Route 230 to Bonavista:** Beautiful in any season, this stunning stretch of highway is especially breathtaking when cloaked in early fall foliage. You'll find yourself wanting to pull over at every bend in the road so you can really appreciate the incredible views. The shining stars of the journey are the towns of Trinity and Bonavista, and the sweeping ocean panorama seen from the end of the road at Cape Bonavista. See chapter 7.
- **The foot of the Heritage Run:** If you look at the Burin Peninsula on a map, you'll notice it resembles a leg with a foot on the end. The long "leg" of the Heritage Run has some memorable moments, though for the main, it doesn't qualify as a scenic drive. But the loop journey from the ankle to the toe and back (rtes. 222, 220, and 213) is a different story. Here, you'll follow a coastal trail with an obvious maritime theme. Highlights of the trip are the lobster pots, fishing boats, and immaculate wharf facilities you'll spot along the side of the road. See chapter 7.

- **Kittiwake Coast:** It's a long drive from Gambo through the assorted towns and villages along the north coast (rtes. 320–330) before heading back to the Trans-Canada Highway at Gander, but it's so worth the effort. En route are picture-perfect picnic spots, a sandy beach (rare in this part of the world), and the community known as the “Venice of Newfoundland.” See chapter 8.
- **Route 430 up the Northern Peninsula:** At Deer Lake, Route 430 spurs north along the western side of the northern peninsula. You'll pass through Gros Morne National Park, Port au Choix National Historic Site, L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site, and the town of St. Anthony, where

you're likely to see an iceberg or two. In between all the official highlights, the road passes through some handsomely rugged and remote countryside. See chapter 9.

- **Labrador Coastal Drive:** Route 510 takes you from the ferry at Blanc Sablon, Quebec, to the captivating outpost of Red Bay, Labrador. It's a paved road (one of the few in Labrador, so take advantage of it), which gives you a chance to tour the interesting communities and many historical attractions found on the Labrador Straits. Highlights include sunken Spanish galleons, a 7,500-year-old burial mound, and Atlantic Canada's tallest lighthouse. See chapter 10.

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## 4 THE MOST PICTURESQUE VILLAGES

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- **Quidi Vidi** (St. John's): Pronounced “kiddee viddee,” this historical fishing village has managed to stop time in its tracks. You're not more than 5 minutes' drive from the traffic of downtown St. John's, yet Quidi Vidi has the oldest cottage in North America, horses grazing on the cliffs overlooking the peaceful lake, and timeless fishing sheds snuggling up to the granite cliffs that guard its sheltered harbor. See chapter 5, p. 100.
- **Petty Harbour** (St. John's): Just 15 minutes south of St. John's, this peaceful and quaint fishing village has been the backdrop for a number of films. With its aging fishing sheds, wooden slipways, and cliff-hugging houses tucked within a protective hillside embrace, its attraction as a movie set is readily apparent. It's amazing to find such a picturesque and well-preserved piece of traditional Newfoundland culture just minutes from the capital city. See chapter 5, p. 101.
- **Ferryland** (Avalon Peninsula): Aside from the unique lure of its ongoing archaeological dig (impressive as that is), the town of Ferryland is a strikingly attractive community. It flows down from the hills in graceful descent to sea level, layers of green grass and rocky knolls sprinkled amid stubborn settlement. On the small peninsula extending out from Ferryland Harbour is a lighthouse, its blinking eye a haunting reminder of the tragedy that can befall unwary sailors. To plan your visit to Ferryland, see chapter 6, p. 115.
- **Brigus** (Avalon Peninsula): You'll see lots of beautiful flowers and overhanging trees lining the narrow streets that lead to the harbor of this historic fishing village, and an abundance of heritage-style homes that give the place a real step-back-in-time feel. If you're looking to make the modern world go away for a while, Brigus is the perfect retreat. See chapter 6, p. 123.

## Getting to Know Salvage

On the western edge of the Eastern Region, following Route 310 east of Glovertown, is one of the most picturesque (and most photographed!) fishing communities in the province. Salvage (pronounced “sal-vage”) is a visual treat of stages, wharves, sheds, and slipways nestled in and around a granite shore. This, the never-ending ocean serenade, and houses built in the unlikeliest of places, make Salvage an unforgettable destination.

- **Dildo** (Avalon Peninsula): If the name alone isn't enough to spark your curiosity, you might be attracted by this historical fishing village's proud seafaring history. And then there's its aesthetic beauty: it was named one of Canada's prettiest towns, and you're sure to agree when looking at the wonderful view of Trinity Bay. Green space and simple wooden fences add to Dildo's rustic charm. See chapter 6, p. 125.
- **Trinity** (Eastern Region): Time seems to have stood still for this quaint fishing village that has preserved many of its 19th-century buildings. Or, if it hasn't stood still, there's certainly a concerted community effort to turn back the clock. If you climb the hill from Courthouse Road behind the Royal Bank just before sunset, you'll get one of the most beautiful views available anywhere. See chapter 7, p. 135.
- **Twillingate** (Central Region): Here is a community perfectly positioned for optimum iceberg viewing. With such impressive floating monoliths frequenting the shore every spring and early summer, you'll be forgiven if your attention wanders from the man-made beauty in and around the town. But rest assured, Twillingate is indeed a complementary composition of raw landscape and human construction. You'll find it at the northern end of Route 340. See chapter 8, p. 165.
- **François** (Central Region): At the opposite end of the compass from Twillingate is an isolated outport village, accessible only by ferry. It has neither paved road nor hotel, but that doesn't put François at a disadvantage. Majestic cliffs ring the little community, and wooden boardwalks serve as the local land highway (the real highway is the ocean). You'll have to work to find it, as it's hidden from view on a narrow strip of land at the head of a fjord. See chapter 8, p. 172.
- **Port aux Basques** (Western Newfoundland): An often underappreciated community, Port aux Basques is more than a relay station for the Newfoundland–Nova Scotia ferry. It has both traditional architectural beauty and an impressive blasted-rock harbor entrance. It takes on a romantic ambience in the twilight hours, thanks to the guide lights used to illuminate the ferry terminal. See chapter 9, p. 175.
- **Battle Harbour** (Labrador): Accessible only by boat, this one-time capital of Labrador was abandoned in the 1960s. Now restored, century-old buildings and a simple beauty create a haunting, yet memorable, destination. Escape the hustle and bustle of the modern world, whether for a day trip or overnight stay in the nostalgic Battle Harbour Inn. See chapter 10, p. 218.

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## 5 THE BEST HIKES & WALKING TOURS

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- **St. John's Haunted Hike** (St. John's): Looking for something different? Try this after-dark stroll through downtown St. John's with the Reverend Thomas Wyckham Jarvis, Esquire. He'll take you on a rather eerie walk through some of the oldest graveyards in the city and add quite a bit of theatrics along the way to keep your adrenaline pumping. See chapter 5, p. 106.
- **Signal Hill–Battery Trail** (St. John's): Not for the faint of heart! This walk starts at a pinnacle height, towering over the capital city, and follows a thigh-burning descent along a dizzying path less than 3m (9½ ft.) from the edge of a 61m (200-ft.) drop to the Atlantic Ocean. Those brave enough to attempt it are rewarded with the most spectacular scenery in the city. See chapter 5, p. 99.
- **East Coast Trail** (Avalon Peninsula): This 220km (137-mile) route is one of North America's classic hiking trails. From St. John's, it leads south along the beautiful coastline of the Avalon Peninsula. You can see whales and seabirds close to shore, and parts of the trail are easy enough for the beginner. It's divided into sections, so you can do as much or as little as you like, tailoring your hike(s) to your time frame and fitness level. See chapter 6, p. 129.
- **British Harbour Trail** (Eastern Region): An old cart road leads to an abandoned outpost village and then follows a starkly beautiful stretch of rocky coast to a second village. See chapter 7, p. 139.
- **Terra Nova National Park** (Eastern Region): Much of this park's focus is on the water, but a number of interesting hikes lace the dense mainland forest. A favorite is the **Coastal Trail**, linking the main campground and visitor center. See chapter 7, p. 149.
- **Gros Morne National Park** (Western Newfoundland): It's impossible to select one particular trail from this park as the best; they're all very different, and you can choose one that meets your own abilities or interests. If you're an experienced hiker and enjoy the challenges of a difficult climb, you'll find that the **Gros Morne Mountain Trail** offers the most spectacular rewards. See chapter 9, p. 184.
- **Port au Choix National Historic Site** (Western Newfoundland): Two connected hiking trails, each with its own attributes, crisscross this historically important site halfway up the northern peninsula. The **Phillips Garden Coastal Trail** stands out for the opportunity of watching archaeologists at work. See chapter 9, p. 197.
- **HMS Raleigh Trail** (Labrador): On this coastal hike at Point Amour, you can marvel at 500-million-year-old fossils, search out a shipwreck, photograph a waterfall, and pick mouthwatering berries, all without having to go too far off the beaten track. The trail begins at Atlantic Canada's tallest lighthouse. See chapter 10, p. 215.

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## 6 THE BEST FAMILY ACTIVITIES

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- **Johnson Geo Centre** (St. John's): This underground geological display is fun for the entire family. Adults will appreciate the educational interpretive program, while teenagers will be impressed by the oversize exhibits (and cool audiovisual presentation with simulated rain and volcanic eruptions).



- Younger children will entertain themselves just squirting water at the exposed rock wall. See chapter 5, p. 99.
- **Fluvarium** (St. John's): This first-class interpretation facility provides visitors the opportunity to go beneath the surface to see trout and underwater species (the building boasts a glass-walled viewing area). Try to time your visit for the day's scheduled feeding. See chapter 5, p. 102.
  - **Avondale Railway Station Museum** (Avalon Peninsula): For over a century, trains played a vital role in moving people and goods across Newfoundland. You can see just how important they were at the Avondale Railway Station Museum, the province's oldest railway station. There are decommissioned cars on display, and during the summer, children can go for a ride on one of the museum's small rail cars. See chapter 6, p. 125.
  - **Stan Cook Sea Kayak Adventures** (Avalon Peninsula): Kayaking is fun for the young and the young-at-heart. Stan Cook's company has specially designed kayaks so children too young to paddle on their own can ride with mom or dad. And, for beginners, there's expert on-shore instruction provided prior to heading out onto the water. See chapter 6, p. 130.
  - **Terra Nova Resort** (Eastern Region): This resort offers golfing, nature hikes, mini-golf, tennis, basketball, swimming, a children's program, and more. See chapter 7, p. 153.
  - **Frenchman's Cove Provincial Park** (Eastern Region): This Burin Peninsula park offers a pebble beach, playground, and freshwater pond for outdoor swimming. Don't worry, the adults won't find themselves at loose ends—they can walk the fairways of a 9-hole golf course. See chapter 7, p. 148.
  - **Terra Nova National Park:** Terra Nova gets high marks for its family activities. The park has an excellent interpretive program, nice campgrounds, a sandy beach for watersports and swimming, an evening interpretive program, great hands-on displays at the Visitor Centre, easy walking trails, and boat tours of Newman Sound. See chapter 7.
  - **Splash-n-Putt Resort** (Eastern Region): The largest water park in the province, with a 91m-long (299-ft.) waterslide, comes complete with bumper cars, go-karts, and mini-golf. See chapter 7, p. 156.
  - **Marble Mountain Resort** (Western Newfoundland): Winter fun for the entire family, the 35 named runs have something for everyone; snowboarders gravitate to the half-pipe and terrain park. For the younger set, there's certified ski and snowboard instruction and a day care, which means parents and children get to enjoy the resort on their own terms. See chapter 9, p. 182.
  - **Newfoundland Insectarium** (Western Newfoundland): What kid doesn't like bugs or butterflies? Kids have a great time here, watching honeybees buzz about, stretching out their hands to catch a butterfly, getting some bug-related souvenirs to take home, and having an ice cream when they're finished. See chapter 9, p. 184.
  - **Norstead** (Western Newfoundland): This reenactment village depicts the everyday life of Norsemen—and women—from A.D. 1000. Norstead's wonderful Discovery Program for kids offers a hands-on opportunity to participate in the various activities that would have been carried out in the settlement. Even the teens will be shocked out of their chronic boredom by the clanging swords and hand-to-hand combat of the mock battles. See chapter 9, p. 205.

## 7 THE BEST PLACES TO DISCOVER LOCAL HISTORY & CULTURE

- **The Rooms** (St. John's): Constructed to resemble "fishing rooms," where families would process their catch, this imposing complex combines the provincial museum, art gallery, and archives. Far from your typical stuffy museum, it features a distinct contemporary ambience, as the story of the province's human and natural history unfolds while you move from room to room. See chapter 5, p. 98.
- **Signal Hill** (St. John's): Just a short drive from downtown, this National Historic Site offers the best view of St. John's and the harbor. It was here that Guglielmo Marconi received the first wireless transatlantic signal, using a kite to catch the faint transmission from Poldhu, England. For the full effect, time your visit to take in the Signal Hill Military Tattoo. See chapter 5, p. 99.
- **Basilica of St. John the Baptist** (St. John's): For years the largest and most imposing structure on the St. John's skyline, the Basilica was one of the few buildings to survive the Great Fires that devastated the capital city during the early part of the 20th century. A highlight of your visit will be a viewing of the Veiled Virgin statue. See chapter 5, p. 98.
- **Quidi Vidi Battery** (St. John's): In the early battles for control of the colony of St. John's, heavy fortifications were constructed at strategic locations throughout the city. This quiet hill overlooking Quidi Vidi Harbour was one of them. Today, costumed interpreters explain the purpose of the installation and the people who resided there. See chapter 5, p. 100.
- **Colony of Avalon** (Avalon Peninsula): Make your first stop at this independently run national historic site, south of St. John's, the Interpretation Centre. From this point, it's a short stroll through the village of Ferryland to the dig site, where archaeologists are continuing to uncover remnants of the first successful planned colony in Newfoundland. See chapter 6, p. 117.
- **Hawthorne Cottage National Historic Site** (Avalon Peninsula): The former home of famous Arctic explorer Captain Bob Bartlett includes intriguing insights into the life and times of the man and his family, as well as the struggles he faced on his expeditions. See chapter 6, p. 126.
- **Dildo & Area Interpretation Centre** (Avalon Peninsula): This is a fascinating facility if you're interested in the workings of a fish hatchery and want to learn more about the way of life for Newfoundlanders of the not-so-distant past, as well as the native peoples who once inhabited the region. Plus, it comes with a replica of a giant squid that was caught in the area! See chapter 6, p. 125.

### Exploring St. John's Art Galleries

Artists are acknowledged mediums for the ideas and attitudes of their cultural generations. You can see (and buy) the work of some of the most talented artists in the province through one of several St John's art galleries: Christina Parker, Emma Butler, and Lane. See chapter 5, p. 108.

- **Trinity Historical Properties** (Eastern Region): While the entire community of Trinity is a living museum, with residents embracing their past as the route to future prosperity, a few buildings are open as tourist attractions. These include the Lester-Garland Premises, Hiscock House, Trinity Museum, Court House, and Green Family Forge. See chapter 7, p. 138.
- **Ryan Premises National Historic Site** (Eastern Region): This cluster of 19th-century harborfront buildings is a restoration of the merchant premises that served as the hub of a once-thriving fishing community. The Interpretive Centre has an excellent display about changes that have affected the province's fishery. Also check out the replica in the harbor of the *Matthew*, the three-masted 15th-century vessel sailed by John Cabot to Newfoundland in 1497. See chapter 7, p. 142.
- **Burin Heritage Museum** (Eastern Region): The communities of Grand Bank and Fortune are among the closest in the world to the infamous fishing grounds of the Grand Banks. Through interpretive panels and traveling exhibits, this museum pays tribute to that heritage. See chapter 7, p. 147.
- **Barbour Living Heritage Village** (Central Region): Similar to the Ryan Premises, but on a larger scale. It's not just a restored commercial property, but a series of reconstructed buildings typical of a fishing village (ca. 1900). They're more than just historical monuments, however. These multipurpose buildings also serve as the local museum, theater, and art gallery. See chapter 8, p. 164.
- **Boyd's Cove Beothuk Interpretation Centre** (Central Region): With all the hype about John Cabot discovering Newfoundland, and even the Vikings arriving a millennium ago, it's easy to forget that there were permanent residents here long before the Europeans arrived. Boyd's Cove is one of those sites that help us remember. Although little is known about Newfoundland's now-extinct Beothuk, Boyd's Cove sheds some light on who they were and how they adapted to Newfoundland's harsh environment. See chapter 8, p. 165.
- **Dorset Soapstone Quarry** (Central Region): Even before the Beothuk, there were Dorset people living on the island of Newfoundland. Proof of their existence can be found in the province's earliest known mine, where the Dorset mined soapstone for use as bowls and cooking pots. See chapter 8, p. 171.
- **Port au Choix National Historic Site** (Western Newfoundland): What is it about Port au Choix that has made it the location of choice for five different native populations over the last 4,500 years? Archaeologists are still trying to puzzle the answer from the clues left behind from past civilizations (including the Maritime Archaics, the Groswater, and the Dorset-Paleoeskimo). See chapter 9, p. 197.
- **Grenfell Interpretation Centre** (Western Newfoundland): This is a recommended stop for anyone interested in the early medical history of northern Newfoundland and Labrador. Learn about Sir Wilfred Thomason Grenfell, the English doctor who became a local hero to the Inuit and early settlers of the region. See chapter 9, p. 202.
- **L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site** (Western Newfoundland): Make your first stop the visitor center, to learn about the Vikings who landed at the tip of the Northern Peninsula around A.D. 1000. Then, you'll walk among the sunken foundations of their village. Plus, there is a re-created Viking village, with reenactors on hand to demonstrate how these early settlers might have interacted with each other. See chapter 9, p. 205.

- **Red Bay National Historic Site** (Labrador): Once the whaling capital of the world, the name Red Bay came from the color of the water, which was supposedly so bright with whales' blood that it flowed red. Inside the interpretive center is a reproduction of a wooden whaling boat, surrounded by the mandible (jawbone) of a bowhead whale. The area wasn't treacherous just to whales, however; at least three Spanish galleons are known to have gone down in the waters

of Red Bay. For more information, see chapter 10, p. 217.

- **Battle Harbour** (Labrador): One of my favorite places in all of Newfoundland and Labrador, this community, once the hub of Labrador, was abandoned in the 1960s; but thanks to enterprising locals, many buildings have been restored, and you can visit for a day or even stay overnight. Access is by boat in summer only. See chapter 10, page 218.

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## 8 THE BEST FESTIVALS & SPECIAL EVENTS

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- **Newfoundland & Labrador Folk Festival** (St. John's): This is an absolute must for lovers of traditional music. The 3-day event takes place in downtown St. John's during the first weekend of August and provides a good variety of music that includes folk, country, bluegrass, and Celtic. See chapter 5, p. 103.
- **Royal St. John's Regatta** (St. John's): This is the biggest event of the year for St. John's; its importance is recognized by its status as a municipal holiday. The oldest continuous sporting event in North America offers a day in early August of fixed-seat rowing races and lots of fun for the entire family at Quidi Vidi Lake. See chapter 5, p. 104.
- **George Street Festival** (St. John's): You'll enjoy the George Street Festival if you're young (or, at the very least, young-at-heart) and don't mind loud music and crowds. During the 6-day midsummer event, a 2-block stretch of the downtown street is closed off, and bars open up their doors and bring in a lineup of terrific entertainment. See chapter 5, p. 103.
- **Shamrock Festival** (Avalon Peninsula): Traditional Irish-Newfoundland music mingles with some modern material in this popular late-July event held

outdoors in the community of Ferryland. Many of the province's best-known performers are from this part of the province, so the lineup is always guaranteed to impress. See chapter 6, p. 115.

- **Brigus Blueberry Festival** (Avalon Peninsula): Arrive early because there's always a crowd in Brigus for this popular mid-August event. It's an excellent venue for buying locally made products such as knitted goods, quilts, and, of course, blueberry products. See chapter 6, p. 123.
- **Summer in the Bight** (Eastern Region): Each year between June and October, the **Rising Tide Theatre** puts on a number of professional shows that give poignant life to the Newfoundland character and lifestyle. Staged at both indoor and outdoor venues, Summer in the Bight includes the renowned **New Founde Lande Trinity Pageant**. See chapter 7, p. 138.
- **The Fish, Fun & Folk Festival** (Central Region): One of the largest and longest-running folk festivals in Newfoundland, this event is held the last full weekend of July in Twillingate. If you want to have a great time with the family and gain deeper insight into what makes Newfoundlanders tick, plan to take in this event. See chapter 8, p. 168.

- **Exploits Valley Salmon Festival** (Central Region): This 5-day family event and salmon celebration is held mid-July in Grand Falls–Windsor. Take time to enjoy a performance at the highly regarded **Summer Theatre Festival**. See chapter 8, p. 170.
- **Gros Morne Theatre Festival** (Western Newfoundland): Treat yourself to a dinner-theater production of excellent regional music, comedy, and drama while in the area of Gros Morne National Park between June and September. The festival is held in the northern part of the park. Twice weekly, you'll have the chance to enjoy a theatrical performance, as well as taste some of the best pan-fried cod found anywhere. See chapter 9, p. 190.
- **Bakeapple Folk Festival** (Labrador): Time your visit to the Labrador Straits for the second weekend of August, when the cloudberry, or bakeapple berries, are ripe and the biggest summer event of the year is taking place. You'll get 4 days of fun, music, and merriment. See chapter 10, p. 216.

## 9 THE BEST HOTELS & RESORTS

- **Courtyard St. John's** (131 Duckworth St., St. John's; ☎ 866/727-6636 or 709/722-6636; [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)): This is the newest hotel to rise among downtown's historic core. Rooms are stylish, and the friendly and knowledgeable front-desk staffers are an unexpected bonus. See chapter 5, p. 85.
- **Murray Premises Hotel** (5 Beck's Cove, St. John's; ☎ 866/738-7773 or 709/738-7773; [www.murraypremiseshotel.com](http://www.murraypremiseshotel.com)): You simply can't beat the attention to detail at this beautifully decorated boutique hotel, which was once a waterfront warehouse. The staff and management are top-notch, offering an exceptional standard of service to ensure your stay is enjoyable. See chapter 5, p. 86.
- **Sheraton Hotel Newfoundland** (115 Cavendish Sq., St. John's; ☎ 800/325-3535 or 709/726-4980; [www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com)): Recently rebranded after operating as a Fairmont property for many years, this is the best-known full-service property in the province. Although it lacks an outwardly Newfoundland style—because of its size and branding—you will still find the unique island character in the personality of the caring and professional staff. See chapter 5, p. 86.
- **Bears Cove Inn** (15 Bears Cove Rd., Witless Bay; ☎ 866/634-1171 or 709/334-3909; [www.bearscoveinn.com](http://www.bearscoveinn.com)): Don't pick this lodging if a long list of amenities is important to you. But if you're looking for a place where you can see the ocean from inside your room or while sitting on your private deck overlooking the rugged coastline, this is a great choice. See chapter 6, p. 114.
- **The Wilds at Salmonier River** (Rte. 90, Salmonier Line; ☎ 866/888-9453 or 709/229-5444; [www.thewilds.ca](http://www.thewilds.ca)): Even Fido is welcome at this terrific family resort. The Wilds has self-contained cabins, as well as hotel-style rooms in the main building. One of the province's finest golf courses is on-site, and you're just minutes from Salmonier Nature Park. See chapter 6, p. 119.
- **Bird Island Resort** (Main Rd., St. Bride's; ☎ 709/337-2450; [www.birdislandresort.com](http://www.birdislandresort.com)): This resort offers fully equipped efficiency units that are ideal for traveling families. All-ages fun includes mini-golf, horseshoe pits, and a fitness center. This is the closest

accommodations to Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve. See chapter 6, p. 121.

- **Terra Nova Resort** (Port Blandford; ☎ 709/543-2525; www.terrannovagolf.com): This full-service family resort offers a great kids' program, an outdoor swimming pool, tennis, a challenging 27-hole golf course, and in-house dining, and it's ideally situated for day trips into Terra Nova National Park. See chapter 7, p. 153.
- **BlueWater Lodge & Retreat** (Trans-Canada Hwy. near Gander; ☎ 709/535-3003; www.relax-at-bluewater.ca): A wonderful place to stay while touring Notre Dame Bay and other points in the Central Region, the lodge has a private, serene setting on a small lake, making it a perfect retreat for anyone really wanting to get away from it all. See chapter 8, p. 159.
- **Marble Inn Resort** (Dogwood Dr., Steady Brook; ☎ 877/497-5673 or 709/634-2237; www.marbleinn.com): It doesn't have the attitude of the official Marble Mountain Resort, and that's a good thing. I find these cabins are actually cozier and more inviting than their more expensive counterparts. The ample on-site amenities (sauna, fitness facility, canoe rentals, and playground) add even more value to the package. See chapter 9, p. 180.
- **Sugar Hill Inn** (Norris Point Rd., Norris Point; ☎ 888/299-2147 or 709/458-2147; www.sugarhillinn.nf.ca): After a long day of hiking in Gros Morne National Park, this little slice of luxury will be much appreciated. The six guest rooms are warm and inviting, and the food is top-notch. See chapter 9, p. 190.

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## 10 THE BEST BED & BREAKFASTS, & HERITAGE INNS

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- **Bluestone Inn** (34 Queen's Rd., St. John's; ☎ 877/754-9876 or 709/754-7544; www.thebluestoneinn.com): Modern chic blends effortlessly with classic architectural design for a one-of-a-kind B&B. This place has it all: splendid downtown location, an interesting history, superlative food, and spacious guest rooms. See chapter 5, p. 87.
- **Winterholme Heritage Inn** (79 Rennies Mill Rd., St. John's; ☎ 800/599-7829 or 709/739-7979; www.winterholme.com): Bring your neck brace—you'll need it from constantly staring upward at the ornately carved woodwork. If you're a real romantic, reserve one of the suites with a jetted tub and fireplace. See chapter 5, p. 89.
- **Inn by the Bay** (78 Front Rd., Dildo; ☎ 888/339-7829 or 709/582-3170; www.innbythebaydildo.com): Who can resist staying in one of "Canada's 10 Prettiest Towns"? This lovely B&B has an attentive owner and a waterfront location, and it's right in the heart of Dildo, an odd-sounding but very beautiful fishing village. See chapter 6, p. 124.
- **Artisan Inn** (High St., Trinity; ☎ 877/464-7700 or 709/464-3377; www.artisaninntrinity.com): This is a wonderful B&B in the scenic village of Trinity. The inn's Ocean Shore Apartment—with a private deck overlooking Trinity Bay—is my favorite room. See chapter 7, p. 135.
- **Fishers' Loft Inn** (Mill Rd., Port Rexton; ☎ 877/464-3240 or 709/464-3240; www.fishersloft.com): A short drive from Trinity, this remote property

with an ethereal atmosphere is perfect for anyone seeking peace, tranquillity, and fine food. See chapter 7, p. 136.

- **Elizabeth J. Cottages** (Harris St., Bonavista; ☎ 866/468-5035 or 709/468-5035; www.elizabethcottages.com): One of the finest cottage accommodations in all of Newfoundland and Labrador—think fine cotton sheets on an oversize bed, plush bathrobes, a modern entertainment system, polished hardwood floors, and a private deck with sweeping ocean views. See chapter 7, p. 140.
- **Cape Anguille Lighthouse Inn** (Cape Anguille; ☎ 877/254-6586 or 709/634-2285; www.linkumtours.com): Experience life as a lighthouse keeper at this unique accommodation high above the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Aside from gracious hospitality and magnificent scenery, bird-watchers will love the

diversity of species present in the area. See chapter 9, p. 176.

- **Quirpon Lighthouse Inn** (boat transfer from Quirpon; ☎ 877/254-6586 or 709/634-2285; www.linkumtours.com): This isolated island retreat is the perfect escape from techno-society. Amenities include hearty home-cooked meals, endless waves, iceberg views, and conversations with whales. It's just you and your thoughts for company. See chapter 9, p. 205.
- **Battle Harbour Inn** (Battle Island, Labrador; ☎ 709/921-6325 or 709/921-6216; www.battleharbour.com): Looking to step back in time? This small inn will enable you to do just that. It has wood stoves and oil lamps, and the setting is in the oldest intact salt-fish community in the province. See chapter 10, p. 219.

## 11 THE BEST RESTAURANTS

- **Bacalao** (65 Lemarchant Rd., St. John's; ☎ 709/579-6565): It didn't take long for Bacalao to become one of the capital's most popular dining rooms, shortly after it opened. Order the creamy cod au gratin and you find out why. See chapter 5, p. 90.
- **Blue on Water** (319 Water St.; St. John's; ☎ 709/754-2583): In the heart of historical downtown St. John's, this slick dining room features a bright blue-and-white interior and a kitchen that combines local game with modern cooking styles. See chapter 5, p. 91.
- **Nautical Nellies** (201 Water St., St. John's; ☎ 709/738-1120): Great food, big portions, and reasonable prices in cozy pub surroundings—that's what you'll find at Nautical Nellies. It's both small and very popular, making it hard to get a table. See chapter 5, p. 92.
- **Colony Café** (Rte. 10, Ferryland; ☎ 709/432-3030; www.thecolonycafe.ca): A French chef waits to tempt your taste buds with succulent seafood and rich desserts. The cafe is situated next to the Colony of Avalon archaeological dig in Ferryland. See chapter 6, p. 116.
- **Skipper's Restaurant** (42 Campbell St., Bonavista; ☎ 709/468-7982): After touring the historical sites in Bonavista and taking in the views at Cape Bonavista, it's worth searching out this lovely waterfront restaurant if you like seafood and don't want to pay big prices. You'll find terrific chowder and, for the more adventurous, local delicacies such as fried dough smothered in molasses. See chapter 7, p. 140.
- **Bay of Islands Bistro** (13 West St., Corner Brook; ☎ 709/639-3463): The nouvelle cuisine served here would be

just as much at home in Montreal as it is in Newfoundland's smallest city. See chapter 9, p. 181.

- **Anchor Café** (Main St., Port au Choix; ☎ 709/861-3665): Beyond the ship-shaped entrance is a simple dining room with a wide-ranging menu of inexpensive seafood. My favorite combo is seafood chowder followed by a shrimp burger. See chapter 9, p. 195.
- **Norseman Restaurant** (Rte. 436, L'Anse aux Meadows; ☎ 877/623-2018): Located at the extreme northern tip of the northern peninsula, this restaurant is a fantastic surprise. The

waterfront setting is a delight, the food is as creative and well presented as the best restaurants in St. John's, and the service is professional. See chapter 9, p. 204.

- **Whaler's Restaurant** (Red Bay, Labrador; ☎ 709/920-2156): Want the best fish and chips in Labrador? Then plan on trying the chalupa fish and chips at Whaler's. They're tasty, tangy, and value-priced. And the restaurant is in historic Red Bay, where you can finally find the answer to the riddle, "What is a chalupa?" See chapter 10, p. 217.