

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

with Sainte-Pierre & Miquelon

15 days

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Day 1 Arrival Deer Lake / Corner Brook, Newfoundland

Today we arrive in Deer Lake (airport YDF) on Newfoundland's west coast.* Transfer to Corner Brook (45 min), Newfoundland's second largest city with a population of 30,000.

* LAND AND AIR passengers' transfers are included in their tour cost; LAND ONLY passengers are not entitled to arrival transfers (details included with your pre-trip info package).

Why we stay in Corner Brook and not Deer Lake: If you look at a map, it might seem illogical to spend this night in Corner Brook only to backtrack past Deer Lake the following day. The limited number of hotels in Deer Lake are accustomed to individual travellers booking stays directly and are not geared for groups, applying rigid booking terms that make holding space for our travellers difficult for us. Our chosen hotel in Corner Brook is a "nice" property with some charm and character and a great in-house restaurant, as opposed to a typical airport hotel one would find in Deer Lake. As always we look forward to your feedback.

Overnight in Corner Brook.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Corner Brook - Gros Morne National Park - Port au Choix

Today we set out by private motorcoach along the sheltered west coast of the Northern Peninsula, via Gros Morne National Park, a World Heritage Site. After a stop at the park's visitor center, we continue along the Viking Trail through the lands the Norsemen tamed and settled over 1,000 years ago, dotted with spectacular mountains and forests, rivers and lakes. We stop at Lobster Cove with its lighthouse and fascinating marine display. We also enjoy views of the famous Arches carved by eons of pounding waves.

The day ends with a visit to the Port au Choix National Historic Site. Located on the Viking Trail, this site showcases a 4,500 year old time capsule of rare importance. While prehistoric coastlines have long since slipped beneath the encroaching ocean, the raised shoreline and alkaline soil conditions at the site have combined to preserve rich vestiges of the ancient Maritime Archaic Indian, Groswater Paleoeskimo, and Dorset Paleoeskimo First Nation cultures. Within the Visitor Centre are displayed original artifacts, interactive exhibits, a diorama of an archaeological site of a Dorset house, a topological model indicating the area's ancient beaches and a short film.

Overnight in Port au Choix.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Port au Choix - L'Anse aux Meadows - St Anthony

The highlight of our excursion north is a visit to L'Anse aux Meadows Historic Park, the oldest European settlement in North America, and World Heritage Site. Thought to be the elusive "Vineland" of Norse legends, the L'Anse aux Meadows site features overgrown mounds (excavated in the 1960's) which turned out to be the foundations of eight sod houses of the type the Vikings built in Iceland around AD 900. Evidence of ironwork and carbon-dated bone and turf place the settlement at about AD 1000. We tour the sod-house foundations with a local guide. Next is St Anthony, home of the Grenfell Mission. We visit the Interpretation Centre and browse the unique craft center.

Overnight in St Anthony.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 St Anthony - Ferry to Blanc Sablon, Quebec - L'Anse au Clair, Labrador

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Today we get a closer look at some of the earliest settlements in Canada. We ferry across the Strait of Belle Isle, known as Iceberg Alley, to the fishing village where Jacques Cartier first landed at Blanc Sablon, Quebec.

We then continue by road to Red Bay, Labrador, a community where one of the earliest industrial complexes in the New World – a Basque whaling station, which we visit – has been declared a National Historic Site. Archaeologists have discovered several shipwrecks from the period of 1550-1600 when this was the world whaling capital, supplying Europe with oil for lamps and soap. Archaeologists have also uncovered an astounding number of tools and personal effects that confirm European habitation of this coast during the 16th and 17th centuries. Many of these are now conserved in the Interpretation Centre. This is part of Labrador's famous Coastal Drive Route; modern-day explorers find a wild land dotted with a few coastal settlements inhabited mainly by the descendants of fisherman who began to settle here 200 years ago.

We finish our day back down in L'Anse au Clair, population 264, located 3 km from the Quebec/Labrador border in the Labrador Straits. This is the first established by French fishing interests in the early 1700s; the first permanent settlers were Jersey fishermen. Shortly after the Quebec-Labrador border dispute in 1825, Newfoundlanders and people from the south of England also began settling in L'Anse au Clair. The original name of the community was Anse St. Clair named after one of the first merchants to establish here whose last name was St. Clair. While here, we hope to visit the Gateway to Labrador Visitor Centre.

If skies are favourable this evening, you may see the Northern Lights.

Overnight in L'Anse au Clair.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 L'Anse au Clair, Labrador - Rocky Harbour, Newfoundland

Today we ferry back across to Newfoundland and continue to Rocky Harbour, located on the t coast in the heart of Gros Morne National Park. Finds of arrowheads in the area indicate that the Micmac once inhabited the area. Then came the fishermen from England and France, some of whom eventually stayed all year round. Today this is the largest community in Gros Morne National Park and is centrally located for touring the World Heritage Site.

It took Mother Nature 485,000,000 years to mold Gros Morne National Park into the geological and visual wonder we know today. The second largest National Park in eastern Canada, Gros Morne is a UNESCO World Heritage Site stretching across 1805 square kilometres of western Newfoundland as part of the towering Long Range Mountains.

Encircled by tiny seaside communities, and encompassing forests, freshwater fjords, bogs, barren lowlands, moose, and striking cliffs and shorelines, this area is also world-renowned for its complex geology. It was here that geologists proved the theory of plate tectonics.

Overnight in Rocky Harbour.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Cow Head - Table Lands & Gros Morne - Grand Falls

This morning we visit the Table Lands in Gros Morne National Park, a mountain of flat-topped rock of a kind usually found only deep in the earth's mantle, is a truly awe-inspiring sight. We enjoy a scenic boat tour (weather-permitting) on which we learn the geology of the Tablelands, see the bald eagles that frequent the deep waters of the fjord, and hear the history of the small villages nestled on the shores. It is an unforgettable experience; some say the scenery is unequaled in eastern Canada.

Bidding goodbye to the "Viking Trail," we head south then east through open country dotted with lakes and patches of spruce and pine. Soon we are travelling along the Exploits River and through thick forest country to the town of Grand Falls.

In 1768, Lieutenant John Cartwright, while following the Exploits River, named the waterfall he found "Grand Falls"; however, it took until 1905 before the town of Grand Falls was established. Worried about the impending war in Europe, Alfred Harmsworth (Baron Northcliffe) began looking for an alternative source of newsprint for his family's newspaper and publishing business. During their search for a suitable location to build and operate a pulp and paper mill, he discovered Grand Falls. At that time, only employees of the mill and workers from private businesses were permitted to live in Grand Falls. Other people settled north of the railway in a shack town known as Grand Falls Station, which became Windsor, named for the English Royal Family. Today, Grand Falls-Windsor is central Newfoundland's major service

and distribution centre with considerable mining and aquaculture activity in the region.

Overnight in Grand Falls.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Grand Falls & Twillingate

This morning we stop at the Salmonid Interpretation Centre to view one of North America's largest Atlantic salmon enhancement projects.

We continue to Twillingate, one of Newfoundland's oldest seaports, first settled in 1700 and now with a population of 5,000. Twillingate's location puts it in the path of icebergs drifting south from the Arctic. We visit the Twillingate Museum, with its collection of antiques gathered from the homes in the area. There is also time to shop for the fine knitted handicrafts produced locally.

We finish our day in Gander.

Overnight in Gander.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Gander - Salvage - Clarenville

We visit Terra Nova National Park on Bonavista Bay, with its tiny islands, rocky headlands and forested slopes; a brief stop at its visitors center. Along the "Road to the Isles" the local predilection for colourful language comes across with place names such as "Too Good Arm," "Virgin Arm," and "Crow Head." With luck, you might spot drifting icebergs and whales along the coast.

Then to Salvage, a friendly little village perched on the rocks around a picturesque harbour, perhaps the prettiest spot in Newfoundland. Fishermen's huts, silver-grey from sun and salt, stand at the end of jetties piled with lobster pots and fishing gear. Clapboard homes are dressed in a variety of colours.

We continue to Clarenville, gateway to the Discovery Trail, which extends down the Bonavista Peninsula to Trinity and Bonavista, reputed sight of the first landing of European explorer John Cabot. The trail is a panorama of scenery, historic sites, coastal towns and villages.

Overnight in Clarenville.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Clarenville & The Discovery Trail

Today, two of Newfoundland's most famous outposts, beginning with the site of John Cabot's arrival. We drive to Cape Bonavista, where Cabot is believed to have first sighted the New World on June 24, 1497. Back down the rugged Bonavista Peninsula is Trinity, which was named by the Portuguese explorer Gaspar Corte Real when he sailed into the harbour on Trinity Sunday, 1500. We stroll Trinity's narrow, tree-lined streets, enjoying the beautifully-preserved historic buildings.

Overnight in Clarenville.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Clarenville - Ferry to Saint-Pierre, France

This morning we depart Clarenville and head south onto the beautiful Burin Peninsula via the famous "Heritage Run" route.

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True to its name, the Heritage Run still rings loud with the echoes of colonial industry. The famous Grand Banks, was once a rich fishing ground and was the world's "bread & butter" for centuries. Codfish were plentiful here, attracting first the European fleets and then French and English settlers. From Placentia Bay's collection of islands and the communities that are tucked into the head of Fortune Bay, to the unsheltered vistas and haze covered French outposts of the peninsula's tip.

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We travel to the village of Fortune, the departure point for our afternoon ferry to the French islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon (bring your passports!). These are two groups of islands with a fascinating maritime history (and their own time zone); they make up a part of France off the coast of Newfoundland. Although many people in North America believe those islands are part of Canada or some type of autonomous region, the islands are an integral part of the French Republic. A specific series of institutions and limited autonomy was indeed granted by France but the islands are and shall likely remain French. Hence, the islands have a decidedly European feel; French is the primary language, plus you'll find French food, customs, and the Euro.

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During our time on Saint-Pierre we will have a city / island tour. The "Place du General de Gaulle" on the waterfront, is the heart of the town. It is the unavoidable square to mingle and tap into the "ambiance". The "Zaspiak Bat" or basque playing wall, the "Pointe aux canons" lighthouse, the salt houses, the "Pointe du Diamant" and the last not least the "Arche" museum, are all must-see spots embodying the islands' identity.

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Overnight on Saint-Pierre.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Miquelon & Langlade

This morning we depart by boat for an excursion to the island of Miquelon.

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Miquelon's village, located on a stretch of land to the north of the island, houses 700 people, mostly descendants of Acadiens and Basques. The island is connected to Langlade by a 7.5-mile-long sand isthmus (called the Dune), which was the scene of many shipwrecks. Since the 19th century, these islands have become the center of the archipelago's crop and animal-based agricultural activities, in addition to an important coastal fishing spot. Scallops, lobster, goose and duck foie gras – there's an abundance of delicious specialty foods on these islands! If you're looking for tranquility, this is a little paradise rich in plant and animal life, with endless landscapes studded with ponds, beaches and hills.

We transfer back to St-Pierre in the evening for dinner.

Overnight in Sainte-Pierre.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Saint-Pierre & Ile Aux Marins

Saint-Pierre is a small but lively harbour town. Music bands and singer/writers are often booked in the city's bar, street performers entertain the passers-by and many summer/autumn activities play a part in giving the town its festive spirit.

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This morning we will take boat to Ile Aux Marins and enjoy a guided walking tour of this picturesque museum island. On our guided walk, learn about the heyday of the Grand Banks and inshore fisheries. Visit some of the island's historical buildings (the Museum Archipelitude, the church,) see photos and artifacts from the past, and hear stories that will make this a memorable moment of your visit to Saint-Pierre et Miquelon.

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We return to Saint-Pierre with the balance of the day at leisure.

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Overnight in Saint-Pierre.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Saint-Pierre, France - St John's, Newfoundland

Today we ferry back to the mainland and continue by road to St John's. This is a pretty full (and scenic) day of travel with breaks for refreshment/lunch along the way. We aim to be in St John's in the mid-late afternoon. Our route takes us northeast, up the Burin Peninsula and then east onto the Avalon Peninsula, travelling the last bit of the 7821km TransCanada Highway to it's terminus.

St. John's, the provincial capital, is the perfect combination of big-city luxury and traditional small-town charm. It is one of the oldest and most easterly cities in North America, and has become a rare destination full of character and charisma, with a contemporary, sophisticated edge. The town is quite walkable, with lots of great shopping, restaurants, historical sites and more.

Overnight in St John's.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 St John's Area Touring

Today we enjoy a city tour of the historic sites of St. John's, including Signal Hill, Cabot Tower, and the Basilica of St. John the Baptist.

After a break for lunch downtown, we continue to Bay Bulls for one of the highlights of your trip -- a wildlife-watching boat tour on Witless Bay Ecological Reserve (weather-permitting). Witless Bay is alive with the rhythm of four million wings beating and of 40 tonne whales pulsing through clear blue water. The reserve contains North America's largest Atlantic puffin colony more than 260,000 pairs of the province's official bird nest here during the late spring and summer.

Later we visit the most easterly point in North America, Cape Spear National Historic Site; the oldest surviving lighthouse in Newfoundland is located at the most easterly point of land in North America. It has been restored to its 1839 appearance and shows how a lightkeeper and his family might have lived in the mid-19th century.

This evening we have our farewell dinner back in the city.

Overnight in St John's.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Departure

Departure from St John's.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast