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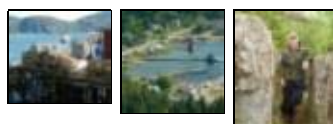
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ISLAND-HOPPING OFF THE COAST OF NEWFOUNDLAND



(2013 - Spring Issue)

Writer: MELODY WREN

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When I mentioned to friends I was island-hopping off the coast of Newfoundland, the reaction didn't vary. "I didn't even know Newfoundland had islands."

Twillingate and Fogo already reap the benefits of tourism. The smaller islands—Change, Little Bay and Gaultois—know and expect tourism, however residents are concerned about whether it can develop without changing the personality and integrity of their communities.

There are similarities on each island as well as vast differences. Every inn I stayed in was so relaxed. I felt quite comfortable popping into the kitchen in the early morning hours in my pajamas to make myself a cup of tea. The marketing of Newfoundland is no fabrication; laundry truly does flap in sunshine.

From Gander airport, we drove directly to Twillingate, a tiny coastal village now



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reachable via a causeway, and instantly fell in love with the gentle, peaceful town. The first morning was spent on *Iceberg Quest II* in search of whales and the icebergs that lend Twillingate its moniker, "iceberg capital of the world." A website, *icebergfinder.com*, notifies people when icebergs are coming, so tourists often show up before the locals know why they are there. Walking around town, we popped in to see the captivating artwork by Ted Stuckless, one of Newfoundland's foremost painters, then ambled down Main Street to see the colourful fabric art by Nina Keogh, former puppeteer for *Mr. Dressup*.

Enchanting Islands

From Twillingate, we drove to Farewell to board a ferry to Fogo, an island dense with natural beauty, stunning coastal views and a luxurious feeling of seclusion. Craggy coastal hikes seemed all the more dramatic due to pelting rain and the bitter cold we experienced one day in July. Our trek brought us to one of the art retreats sprinkled around the coast. Part of an arts program initiated by local millionaire Zita Cobb, they were started to boost the local economy, as was the construction of Fogo Island Inn, which is scheduled to open in May. Cold and soaked, we sought refuge at the delightful Quintal's Guest House, and indulged in gourmet local and regional food next door at Nicole's Café.

From Fogo we took another ferry directly to Change Islands, where the level of ruggedness and solitude increased quite a few notches. Situated at the top of a hill with sea views from every window, the Seven Oakes Island Inn operated by 75-year-old Beulah Oake is an experience akin to staying with your sweetest, kindest aunt. Beulah is the epitome of Newfoundland hospitality.

From Change Islands, we hopped on a ferry to Farewell, drove to Pilley's Island, and ferried to Little Bay Islands. A hike up the scenic 122-metre Pole Hill gave us a bird's-eye view of the diversity of the island and its breathtaking scenery. The small population increases during the summer months when cottagers are lured by the simple beauty and relaxed lifestyle. Being the only tourists on the island, it was an ideal opportunity to practise the art of doing nothing but hike, kayak and sail in an ideal harbour.

Aunt Edna's Boarding House is the only place to stay and eat on the island. Here we felt totally at home with owner Sharlene, who served remarkable homemade meals. Our B&B experience could be summed up as "humble elegance."

We then took a ferry to Shoal Arm and drove two and a half hours to Gander to deliver a friend to the airport, which made our next trek a long one, however it was a drive I would not have wanted to miss. Route 360 to Hermitage was so unique. Imagine driving through a landscape that combined the north of Scotland with the Yorkshire moors. Long stretches of road wowed us with spectacular views along the way.

The helicopter to Gaultois was a brief, exhilarating ride that swooped over steep slopes and the crashing sea. At just \$1.25 a ride, I wanted to stay on board and





do it a few more times.

We walked to the Gaultois Inn, the only place to stay and eat. All six rooms come with glorious sea views. The community is so small, it feels more like a neighbourhood with children playing and riding ATVs, which you need to watch out for, and mothers calling out, "Where you to?"

Gaultois couldn't feel more isolated. Only a three-hour drive from Gander, it is well worth the trip for those who seek off-the-beaten-track experiences. The jumble of steep hills, fjords and sea views is stunningly beautiful, peaceful and quiet. After only one day, I was imagining buying a summer home there.

We hiked the Piccaire trail with local guide, Rodney Andrews, who took us to the far side of the island. Derek Hunt came to pick us up in his boat, which was outfitted with fishing rods so we could fish for cod on the way back to the inn where we happily shared our catch with the other dinner guests. Locals are beyond hospitable and chat as naturally as old friends.

I had envisioned seamlessly travelling from one island to the next, however island travel has its own rhythm—slow, quiet and relaxing. Weather, tides and ferry schedules are stern masters in the islands, occasionally disrupting plans, for which we were thankful.

Travel Planner

Air Canada (aircanada.com) flies directly to Gander from Toronto.

Be sure to pay attention to local time as the time difference is in half-hour segments, which can be quite confusing.

For more information on the islands, visit AdventureCentralNewfoundland.ca or call 1-888-489-2366.

Ferry information is found online at tw.gov.nl.ca/ferryservices/schedules.

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