



Newfoundland & Labrador

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Why Go?

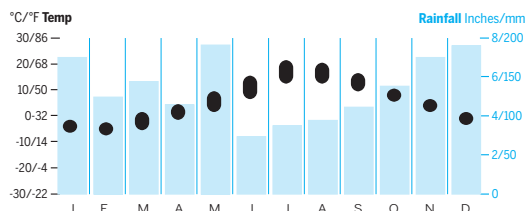
Canada's easternmost province floats in a world of its own. Blue icebergs drift by. Puffins flap along the coast. Whales spout close to shore. The island even ticks in its own off-beat time zone (a half-hour ahead of the mainland) and speaks its own dialect (the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* provides translation, me old cock).

Outside the good-time capital St John's, it's mostly wee fishing villages that freckle the coast, some so isolated they're reached only by boat. They offer plenty of hiking and kayaking escapes where it will just be you, the local family who's putting you up for the night and the lonely howl of the wind.

If you're looking to get off the beaten path – to see Viking vestiges, eat meals of cod tongue and partridgeberry pie, and share fish tales over shots of rum – set a course for this remote hunk of rock.

When to Go

St John's



Best Places to Eat

- » Lighthouse Picnics (p465)
- » Norseman Restaurant (p486)
- » Nicole's Cafe (p478)
- » Bacalao (p459)

Best Places to Stay

- » Tuckamore Lodge (boxed text, p489)
- » Artisan Inn (p469)
- » Tickle Inn (p486)
- » The Cliffhouse (p468)

June Icebergs glisten offshore, though the weather can be wet and foggy

July & August Whales swim by, festivals rock most weekends, and the province is at its sunniest

December & January Skiers hit the slopes as Marble Mountain receives most of its 5m of snow

History

The Paleoindians walked into Labrador 9000 years ago. They hunted seals, fished for salmon and tried to stay warm. The Vikings, led by Leif Eriksson, washed ashore further south at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland in AD 1000. They established North America's first European settlement – 500 years ahead of Columbus – but conflicts with natives and harsh conditions eventually sent them back to Iceland.

John Cabot (Italian-born Giovanni Caboto) sailed around the shores of Newfoundland next. It was 1497, and he was employed by England's Henry VII. He returned to Bristol a hero, with news of finding a new and shorter route to Asia. While Cabot was badly mistaken, his stories of cod stocks so prolific that one could nearly walk on water spread quickly throughout Europe.

Soon the French, Portuguese, Spanish and Basques were also fishing off Newfoundland's coast. There were no permanent settlements on the island, and fishing crews returned to Europe with their bounties at the end of each season. The English fishers' primary base was St John's, while the French congregated around Placentia and the Port au Port Peninsula. In the end it was the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht that ceded all of Newfoundland to England.

The land remained a British colony for most of the next two centuries, with life revolving around the booming fishing industry. Newfoundland's Aboriginal people, the Beothuk, did not fare well after settlement began. Diseases and land conflicts contributed to their demise by 1829.

Ever true to its independent spirit, Newfoundland was the last province to join Canada, doing so in 1949. While Labrador was always part of the package, it wasn't until 2001 that it became part of the provincial name.

Language

One recent visitor described the local accent as Irish meets Canadian while chewing a mouthful of cod. Well said.

Two hundred years ago, coastal fishing families from Ireland and England made up almost the entire population. Since then, as a result of living in isolated outposts, their language has evolved into almost 60 different dialects. Strong, lilting inflections, unique slang and colorful idioms pepper the language, sometimes confounding even residents.

The authoritative source is the **Dictionary of Newfoundland English** (www.heritage.nf.ca/dictionary). In the meantime, here are a few translations:

Long may yer big jib draw. Good luck.

Newfoundland Pronounced 'new-fun-land' (emphasized the same way as 'understand').

Oweshegettinonbys? Pronounced 'how's she getting on, boys?' ie how are you?

Where you longs to? Where are you from?

Land & Climate

They don't call it The Rock for nothing. Glaciers tore through, leaving behind a rugged landscape of boulders, lakes and bogs. The interior remains barren, while the island's cities and towns congregate at its edges near the sea.

Newfoundland's most significant landscape feature is actually offshore. The Grand Banks, which swing around the southeast coast, are an incredibly fertile marine feeding ground. The continental shelf here sticks out like a thumb to intercept the south-flowing waters of the frigid Labrador Current right at the point where it mingles with the warm north-flowing waters of the Gulf Stream. The mix of warmth and nutrient-rich arctic waters creates an explosion of plankton that feeds everything from the smallest fish to the biggest humpback. This is why fishing was supreme here for so many years, and why it remains a top place to view whales and seabirds.

Labrador is more sparse than Newfoundland, puddled and tundra-like, with mountains thrown in for good measure.

Temperatures peak in July and August, when daytime highs average 20°C. These are also the driest months; it rains or snows about 15 days out of every 30. Wintertime temperatures hover at 0°C. Fog and wind

NEWFOUNDLAND FAST FACTS

- » Population: 510,900
- » Area: 405,720 sq km
- » Capital: St John's
- » Quirky fact: Newfoundland has 82 places called Long Pond, 42 called White Point and one called Jerry's Nose