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Nova Scotia Sampler

This compact itinerary showcases the historic and natural diversity within easy reach of Halifax. Soak up some music and culture in Halifax then travel to nearby Peggy's Cove and jostle for position to snap the most photographed lighthouse in the world. Don’t forget your sunscreen in Mahone Bay, where the sun shines on great craft shopping and sea kayaking. Move on slightly south to Lunenburg, a World Heritage site known for its colorful boxy buildings and Bluenose schooner. The Kejimkujik National Park offers a range of terrain from its coastal beaches (in the section of park known as the Kejimkujik Seaside Adjunct) to inland rivers, which are the perfect spot to float a canoe and drift through the woods. Cross the province to Annapolis Royal to stay at a heritage bed and breakfast; explore its fort by day and graveyard by night. The next day visit the wineries around the fabulous college town of Wolfville and the Grand Pré National Historic site, before stopping to down a meal at a fine vineyard restaurant. Lastly, explore the Fundy coast around Parrsboro and Advocate Harbour, or go to Maitland to get right in and raft the tidal bore.
Experience the living world at its most magnificent and explore the juxtaposing cultures that have shaped eastern Canada in this grand northerly tour, best suited to those who love hiking, wildlife and photography. Spend a couple days in Halifax enjoying lively bars and a nonstop music scene, then hit the road up the Atlantic Coast. Stop for a chilly surf at Lawrencetown Beach or a hike through pine forest to a spectacular white-sand beach at Taylor Head Provincial Park. Visit the historical village at Sherbrooke then either cut up Hwy 7 for a shortcut to Cape Breton Island or, with an extra day or two, continue on the coast to the sheltered hamlet of Guysborough. Just after arriving on Cape Breton from the causeway, veer left toward Hwy 30 and stop in at one of the many ceilidh music gatherings along this route. Hook up with the Cabot Trail at Chéticamp, a deeply Acadian town. Next you can watch whales or chant with monks at the Tibetan monastery in Pleasant Bay and look for moose and nesting bald eagles in Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Get your art fix at the studios dotted along the last section of the trail before heading over to Baddeck to learn everything you ever wanted to know about Alexander Graham Bell at the town’s fabulous museum. From here take a jaunt east to Louisbourg to visit the massive, windy restored French Fort complete with costumed thespians and activities to take you back to the 18th century. Stop at the Miners’ Museum in Glace Bay before arriving in industrial North Sydney for the ferry to Newfoundland.

It’s a six-hour sail over the sometimes rough swell of the Cabot Strait to Port aux Basques. Alight and drive north to Gros Morne National Park, rich with mountain hikes, sea-kayak tours, fjords and weird rock formations. Take the Viking Trail from here to its awe-inspiring endpoint: L’Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site, North America’s first settlement. Leif Erikson and his Viking pals homesteaded the place 1000 years ago, and it probably looked much the same then as it does now. After coming all this way, you too will feel like an Atlantic explorer.
Experience the dramatic Fundy tides and its wildlife on this loop that can be tackled from Maine, USA. Cross the bridge to Campobello Island, the childhood home of 32nd US president Franklin D Roosevelt, from Lubec, Maine, then visit the Roosevelt’s home that’s now a fascinating museum. The next day take the car ferry to fisher-funky Deer Island to check out Old Sow, the world’s second-largest natural tidal whirlpool, before boarding another ferry that shuttles you to the mainland. Drive north to gritty yet cosmopolitan Saint John to fill up on fine dining, and warm up your hiking boots at Irving Nature Park the following day to see hundreds of birds and possibly seals. Spend the next few days really breaking your boots in throughout Fundy National Park and its extensive coastal trails. Continue north to Cape Enrage to take a tour of the lighthouse, and sea kayak or rappel down the rock cliffs that meet the rise and fall of the powerful tides. Move on to a day trip to the bizarre Hopewell Rocks formations, a must-see, but expect hundreds of visitors.

Now it’s time to change provinces. Drive across the border to Nova Scotia and down to Joggins to see the Unesco Heritage fossil cliffs. Continue along driftwood-strewn Chignecto Bay to stop for lunch in Advocate Harbour, then move onto Parrsboro via the Cape D’Or Lighthouse, to look for semiprecious stones on the beach and stay the night. Enjoy the views of the Cobequid Bay tides, which can change up to a foot per minute, until you reach Maitland where you can get into inflatable dinghies for an exhilarating rafting adventure on the tidal bore. Scoot southwest to fabulous Wolfville for a night or two to explore the surrounding countryside, before heading deeper into the Annapolis Valley to delightful Annapolis Royal, and onwards to Digby where you can dine on succulent scallops before resting your weary head. In the morning, head over to Long Island, home to the region’s most spectacular whale-watching, before turning back to Digby for the car ferry to Saint John, New Brunswick, where the adventure began.
This tour explores the Maritimes’ locavore dining scene. Start by eating and drinking your way through Halifax, then take the car ferry to Wood Islands, Prince Edward Island (PEI). Spend your first day in Canada’s cutest province exploring the east; stop at Rossignol Estate Winery and quirky distilleries, and stroll on Basin Head Beach. Dine in St Peter’s before moving on to Charlottetown where you can base yourself for the next few days to explore the central part of the province. The capital is a hotbed of farm-to-table restaurants and B&Bs. Head to Malpeque for oysters, say hello to Anne of Green Gables in Cavendish, then gorge on lobster in New Glasgow, if you can stomach all that seafood.

Spend a night or two in Summerside to explore western PEI with a drive up the scenic west coast through Acadian villages to lighthouse vistas. Gape at the windmills of North Cape before looping back on the east coast, stopping to learn about Mi’kmaq culture on Lennox Island.

Take the Confederation Bridge to drive back to Halifax via the wine region around Tatamagouche, or head down the Fundy Coast to Parrsboro.

Short on time but want to see as much as possible? Enjoy Halifax for a day before swinging down to snap a few photos at Peggy’s Cove, then stop for the night in World Heritage–listed Lunenburg with your camera at the ready at every turn. The next day cross via Bridgewater up Hwy 8, stopping for a day hike or a paddle in Kejimkujik National Park, then stay in Annapolis Royal and take the town’s famous nighttime graveyard tour, if you’re not easily spooked! Take a short drive to Digby for a lunch of fried scallops, then take the ferry to Saint John, New Brunswick. If you’re a nature lover, press on to camp in Fundy National Park, otherwise, stay in adorable St Martins. Spend the next day hiking and continuing up the Fundy Coast to view the tides at Cape Enrage and Hopewell Rocks. The next day, drive across the Confederation Bridge into Prince Edward Island (PEI) and Charlottetown. Meet Anne of Green Gables in Cavendish, have a lobster supper then tour PEI’s east coast the following day, with a stop at Point Prim, before taking the car ferry back to Nova Scotia and Halifax.
OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that’s all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, Across Asia on the Cheap. Within a week they’d sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony’s belief that ‘a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse’.

OUR WRITERS

Korina Miller
Plan Chapters, Understand Chapters, Survival Guide

Korina grew up on Vancouver Island and has been exploring the globe independently since she was 16, visiting or living in 36 countries and picking up a degree in Communications and Canadian Studies, an MA in Migration Studies and a diploma in Visual Arts en route. As a writer and editor, Korina has worked on nearly 60 titles for Lonely Planet and has also worked with LP.com, BBC, the Independent, the Guardian, BBC5 and CBC, as well as many independent magazines, covering travel, art and culture. She has currently set up camp back in Victoria, soaking up the mountain views and the pounding surf.

Benedict Walker
Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island

Born in Newcastle, Australia, Ben holds notions of the beach core to his idea of self, though he’s traveled hundreds of thousands of kilometers from the sandy shores of home. Ben was given his first Lonely Planet guide (Japan) when he was 12. Two decades later, he’d write chapters for the same publication: a dream come true. A communications graduate and travel agent by trade, Ben whittled away his twenties gallivanting around the globe. He thinks the best thing about travel isn’t as much about where you go as who you meet: living vicariously through the stories of kind strangers enriches one’s own experience. Ben has also written and directed a play, and toured Australia managing the travel logistics for top-billing music festivals.

Kate Armstrong
New Brunswick

Kate has spent much of her adult life traveling and living around the world. A full-time freelance travel journalist, she has contributed to around 40 Lonely Planet guides and trade publications and is regularly published in Australian and worldwide publications. She is the author of several books and children’s educational titles.

Carolyn McCarthy
Newfoundland & Labrador

Carolyn specializes in travel, culture and adventure in the Americas. She has written for National Geographic, Outside, BBC Magazine, Boston Globe and other publications. A former Fulbright fellow and Banff Mountain Grant recipient, she has documented life in the most remote corners of Latin America. Carolyn gained her expertise by researching guidebooks in diverse destinations. She has contributed to over 30 guidebooks for Lonely Planet, including Colorado, USA, Argentina, Chile, Panama, Peru and the USA National Parks guides. She is also the author of Lonely Planet’s Trekking in the Patagonian Andes.

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