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Experience  
Cape Breton Island:  
INSIDE



# The open air on the open road

Atlantic Canada perfect for cruising twisty coastal routes

by Dale Dunlop  
photography by RoadRUNNER Motorcycle Touring & Travel

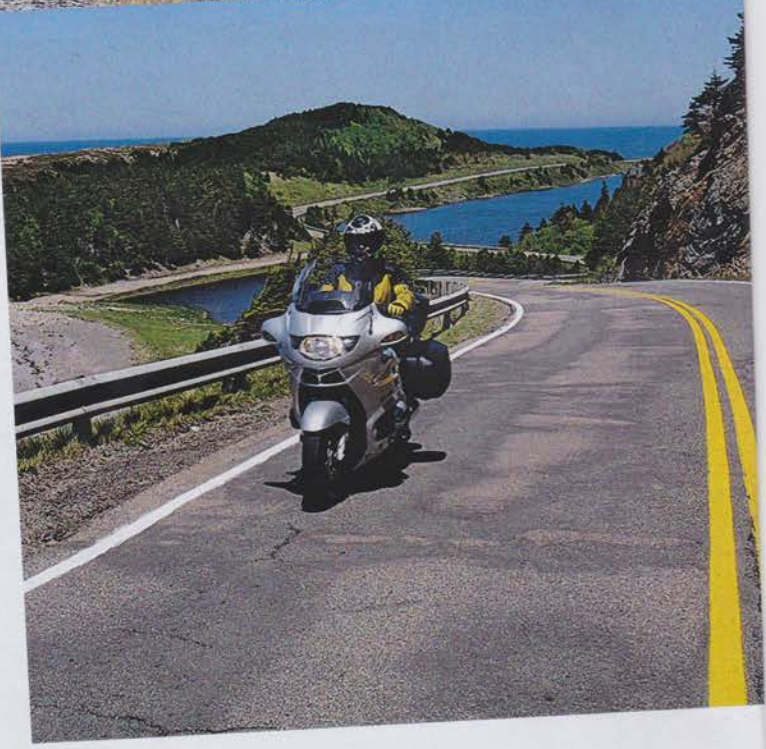
**H**ere in Atlantic Canada we have everything motorcyclists demand in a great touring route—lots of sharp turns, hills and valleys, great vistas and, of course, interesting towns and villages to explore along the way.

Add one great motorcycle rally, and Atlantic Canada goes right to the top of the list of great places to “ride to live”. The biggest challenge, actually, may be in choosing which routes to ride. Here are a few suggestions.

The undisputed king of coastal drives (perhaps in all of North America) is the Cabot Trail on Cape Breton Island. This 298-kilometre circular route has some of the longest and steepest climbs on this continent, as the road quickly ascends from sea level to more than 400 metres in places. There are spectacular lookoffs and plenty of wildlife with a very good chance of seeing a moose or black bear (hopefully off the road).

Down closer to sea level, riders can attend a ceilidh in Margaree, enjoy Acadian cuisine in Cheticamp or go whale watching in Pleasant Bay. The best time of year is in autumn when the hardwood hills are a blaze of colour.

For motorcycles, the best way to ride the Cabot Trail is counter clockwise. There is less traffic and you will be in the scenic outside lane the whole way.





From left: The open road beckons in Newfoundland; shoreline rest stop at the start of the Fundy Trail Parkway in New Brunswick.

Below: Cape Breton stuns with its simple beauty.



Left: Scenery, curves, and no traffic—what more can you ask for?

Above: A charming stop in PEI to satisfy the sweet tooth, always welcomed while riding.

### Cross the Gulf

After touring the Cabot Trail consider hopping on the Newfoundland ferry and riding the Viking Trail all the way up the west coast of the province to historic L'Anse aux Meadows, the only authenticated Viking settlement in North America.

Although the ride from Port aux Basques to Deer Lake where the Viking Trail starts is extraordinarily scenic, the fun really begins at Gros Morne National Park where the spectacular landscape has been named a UNESCO World Heritage site.

A detour to Trout River and Woody Point is a must as the road hugs the shore of Bonne Bay on the way to two authentic Newfoundland villages where the seafood is great and the hospitality nothing short of famous. After crossing the Long Range Mountains the trail follows the coast all the way to St. Anthony with great scenery around every corner including shipwrecks, natural arches, prehistoric archaeological sites and picturesque lighthouses. The Viking Trail has the advantage of little traffic on a well-maintained road. The best time of year for this ride is mid-August to mid-September when there are warmer temperatures and less risk of rain.

Prince Edward Island is, of course, Canada's smallest province, but it should not be overlooked as a place to ride. With its gently rolling hills dotted with the fields that make it the "Garden of the Gulf" it's hard to find a road that is not great for riding. Just getting there is a treat cross-

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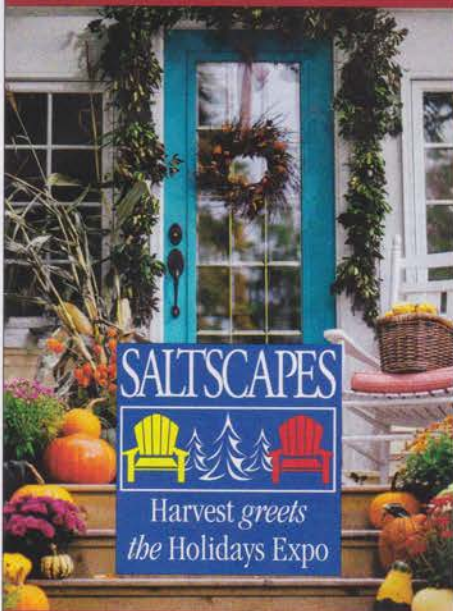
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ing the 12.9 kilometre Confederation Bridge, or taking the ferry from Nova Scotia. Most riders enter one way and leave by the other.

One route just becoming popular starts at the windmill farm at East Point and ends at the windmill farm at North Cape, traversing the entire gulf side of the island along the way. Highlights of this route include many interesting fishing villages, the sand dunes and beaches of Prince Edward National Park, places associated with Anne of Green Gables, a chance to try world famous PEI mussels and Malpeque oysters and of course, the windmills.

PEI weather is consistently good from late June through mid-October so there's lots of choice as to when to go.

New Brunswick has five designated scenic routes all of which are more than suitable for motorcycle touring; however, there is a much lesser known route that is just as interesting.

The Cable Ferries Route gives riders the chance to make seven different crossings of the Saint John in a leisurely journey up and down both sides of the river from just outside the city of Saint John to the historic village of Gagetown. If you like taking ferries—and who doesn't—this is the route for you.

Once in Gagetown riders can pick up the River Valley Scenic Route with a choice of roads on each side of the river to follow all the way to Edmundston near the Quebec border.

Highlights of this route include the chance to drive through the world's longest covered bridge at Hartland, explore Fredericton, one of Canada's prettiest capital cities, and discover how many ways there are to enjoy the wonders of Grand Falls gorge.

With the completion of the Trans-Canada twinning project through New Brunswick, virtually all of the traffic has been siphoned off these scenic byroads and they are now a pleasure to ride.

As a bonus, there is the opportunity to be part of Canada's largest multi-day motorcycle get together. The Wharf Rat Rally in Digby, Nova Scotia is in its 12th year, but it has exploded in popularity among bikers and attracted 64,000 people last year.

There are multiple ways to get to Digby including taking a ferry from Portland, Maine to Yarmouth or a direct ferry from Saint John, New Brunswick. This year's rally is August 31-September 4. For more information visit [wharfrat rally.com](http://wharfrat rally.com).

For more in depth information on places to ride and visit in Atlantic Canada, visit [motorcycletourguidens.com](http://motorcycletourguidens.com). 