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YOUR INTIMATE GUIDE TO CANADA'S EAST COAST

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Hidden gems all along Nova Scotia's south shore

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Experience
 Cape Breton Island:
 INSIDE

Scenic byways of Northern Maine

by Dale Dunlop
photography Paul Cyr

Atantic Canadians, particularly New Brunswickers, have always had a special relationship with the state of Maine, almost considering it the fifth eastern Province. Despite recent changes that make border crossings more than just a wave through by customs officers, thousands of Canadians and Americans cross back and forth every day at the 17 entry points between New Brunswick and Maine. During the summer and fall tourist season many Atlantic Canadians drive south on I-95 or Highway 9 (the old Airline Route) headed for the Maine coastal resorts or the "factory outlet" shopping in Freeport.

What they don't know is that they are speeding by some of the most dramatic and scenic highways in all the US Here's a quick guide to the best of them.

Million Dollar View

If you are pressed for time, this short eight-mile (13 km.) stretch of Highway 1 between the hamlet of Orient and the town of Danforth makes for a good start. The name says it all, with two scenic look-offs high on a ridge that provide jaw dropping views of the Chiputneticook Lakes and forested hills as far as the eye can see with nary a sign of civilization. (The irony is that what you are looking at is mostly in Canada.)

Million Dollar View can be enjoyed by taking a detour off I-95 on to Highway 1 just after crossing into Maine at Houlton. At the town of Danforth, take Highway 169 to Springfield and then follow Highway 6 back to the interstate. More details can be found at exploremaine.org/byways/downeast/milliondollarview.shtml

Saint John Valley Cultural Byway

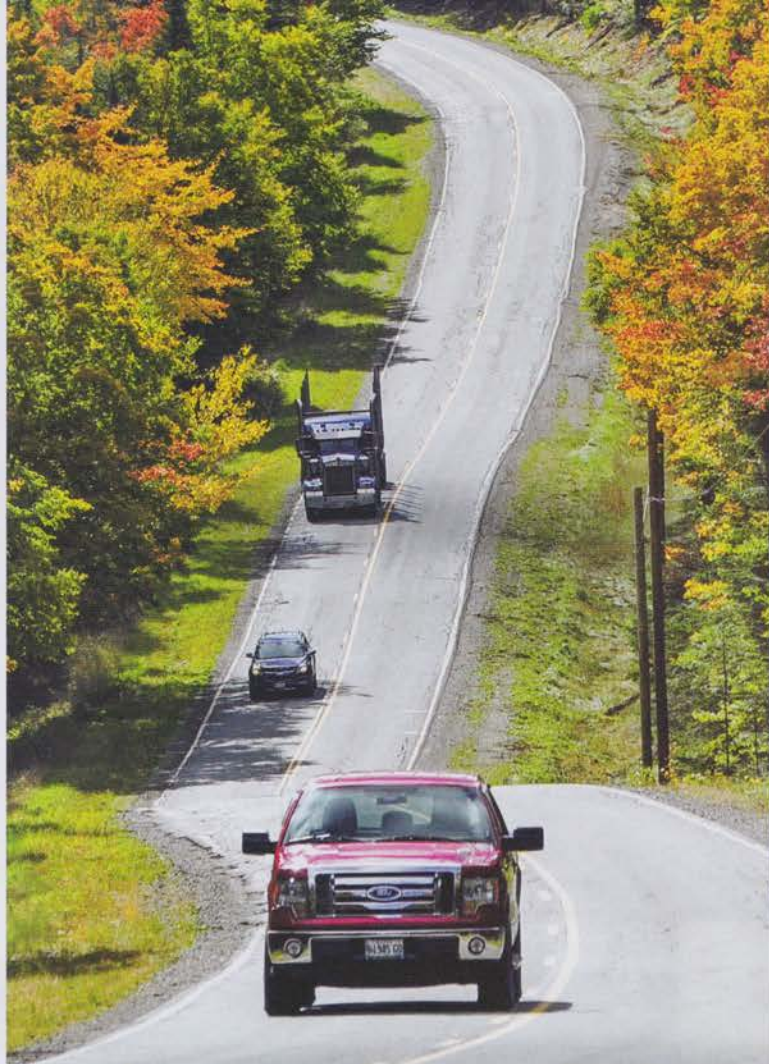
This 92-mile (148 km.) byway starts high up in Aroostook County on Highway 1A near Van Buren and follows the course of the Saint John River deep into the Maine woods to the town of Dickey where the road ends and trips into the Allagash wilderness begin.

It is a celebration of the Acadian culture that has straddled the international border for hundreds of years. Twenty-four recently erected interpretive panels, in English and French, explain the history, geography and economy of an area that once proclaimed itself the independent Republic of Madawaska.

Many of the towns along the route have their own historical museums that provide even more information about a way of life that has been unaffected by the border that separates the two countries. The Saint John Valley Cultural Byway is a destination in itself and worthy of a full day's exploration in this most nethermost region of Maine. More information can be found at exploremaine.org/byways/arostook/stjohnvalley.shtml.

Fish River

After a day exploring the French heritage of northern Maine consider



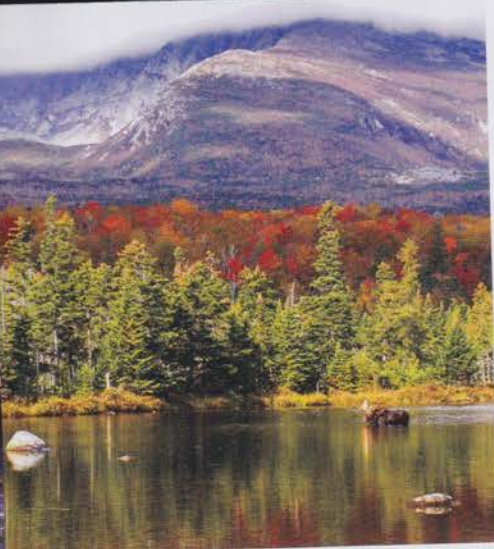
Top: Another great scenic byway between Eagle Lake and Portage.

Above left to right: Acadian festival at Madawaska; Fort Kent Blockhouse was built in 1839 to establish the U.S. claim to northern Maine; it is still standing and is now a National Historic Site.

heading south on Highway 11 towards the Mount Katahdin area where another great scenic byway begins. On the way south, between Fort Kent and Eagle River, the highway follows the course of the Fish River through classic Maine wilderness with lots of opportunities for fishing, wildlife viewing and photography.

Between Eagle Lake and Portage the looming presence of mile high Mount Katahdin comes closer and closer. The Fish River Scenic Byway is also known for its wildflowers in the meadows that flank the road in many places. Before starting out, make sure to visit the Fort Kent blockhouse. Built in 1839 to establish the U.S. claim to northern Maine, it is still standing and is now a National Historic Site.

More information can be found at exploremaine.org/byways/arostook/fishriver.shtml.



Mount Katahdin is the highest peak in Maine. It can be seen from many miles away on all sides. Moose can often be seen in the surrounding woods and waters.

Katahdin Woods and Waters

This scenic byway, formerly called Grindstone for the small town of that name on the route, makes an 89 mile (143 km.) reverse C curve from the northern to the southern boundary of Baxter State Park. However, if you are up for a driving challenge, make it into a circular route by taking the unpaved and in places, quite rugged, road through the park.

Mount Katahdin is the highest peak in Maine and rises abruptly from the forest in such a way that it can be seen from many miles away on all sides. It has long fascinated all who cast their eyes upon it including the Wabanaki people who believe it is home to the storm god, Pamola. Today it is a magnet for hikers who test their mettle on the 17-mile plus trail that climbs and descends more than 8,000 feet.

For really serious hikers, the top of Mount Katahdin marks the

beginning of the 2,200-mile (3,800 km.) Appalachian Trail. Fortunately, there are many other less arduous trails in Baxter State Park suitable for people of all ages. If hiking is not on the agenda, fishing, canoeing, white water rafting and just plain camping out are other options both inside the park and along the scenic byway.

The landscape surrounding Mount Katahdin is considered unique and special and huge swaths of it have been incorporated into one of America's newest parks—Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. For one to truly appreciate the magnificence of the 'great north woods', a visit to this area of Maine is a must.

For more information see exploremaine.org/byways/highlands/katahdinwoods.shtml.

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