

Holiday Gifts

RV destinations, tech tips, recipes and more

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RV Gazette



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Published and printed in Canada
November / December 2012



\$4.75 November/December 2012



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2013
Ford F-150

Exploring
Nova Scotia



East Coast Odyssey

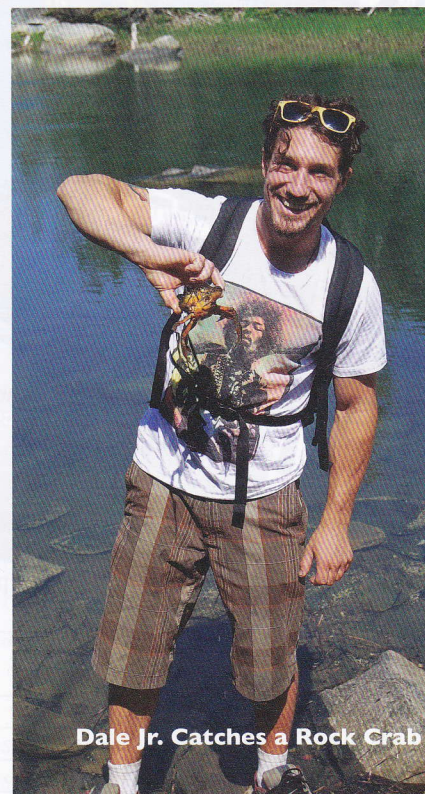
Part I

Exploring Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore is a must.

By Dale Dunlop

My son and I took our first RV trip last year, a 4,000-kilometre journey across the Trans-Labrador Highway. It was a wonderful experience, and we agreed a father-and-son RV trip would become an annual event. This year, we decided to stay closer to home and spend a week exploring an area of Nova Scotia that is long on attraction and short on visitors – the Eastern Shore. Mar-

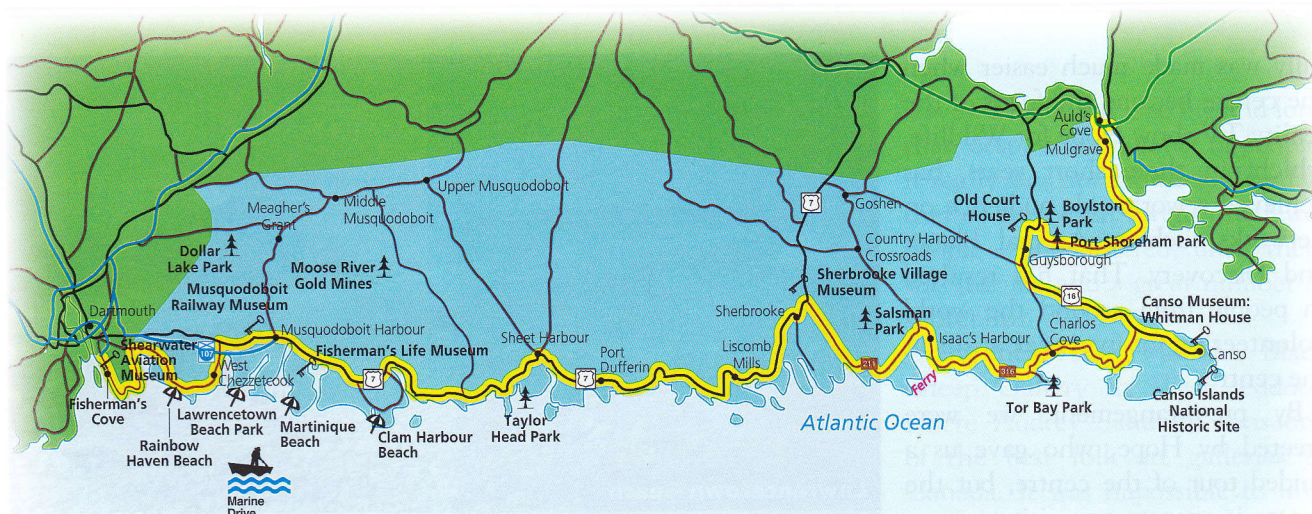
ine Drive, as it is often called, runs north from the Halifax area to the Cape Breton causeway, a distance of just more than 400 kilometres. It is an area of great natural beauty with the Atlantic Ocean playing a dominant role in shaping the landscape. It is sparsely populated with no town having more than 1,000 inhabitants, but there are facilities for RVers spread evenly along the entire route. In short, it is one of



Dale Jr. Catches a Rock Crab

Eastern Canada's hidden gems.

We picked up our 30-foot Winnebago on a beautiful August morning at the Fraserway rental office



in Bedford, where we learned 90 per cent of its customers were Europeans. To them, Atlantic Canada is a land of great natural interest, while we Canadians take it for granted. GO RVing was very generous in sponsoring the trip. There are a number of ways to access the Eastern Shore from the Halifax/Dartmouth area. We chose Route 207 for two reasons: there were numerous places in Dartmouth to buy necessary supplies, and it offered easy access to our first few stops.

Passing through Cole Harbour, hometown of Nova Scotia hockey hero Sydney Crosby, we turned onto Bissett Road and, within minutes, were seemingly miles away from the suburban sameness we had just traversed. Our destination was the Salt Marsh Trail, which was not far down Bissett Road. We parked in the second parking lot and started our first of many hikes. This is a non-motorized, linear trail that is part of the Trans-Canada Trail system. It is built on an abandoned rail bed that bisects the shallow waters of Cole Harbour so that after a short walk through the woods, you are soon surrounded by water on all sides. Several interpretive displays explained the natural and historic history of the area, but all we had to do was look around to see the

abundant birdlife, take in the wonderful smell of the salt air, and listen to the mewing of the gulls to know this was a special place. Rock crabs were so plentiful at one spot that we could catch them with our hands and release them after taking a photograph. There were a number of bridges through which the water rushed with the changing tide at a frightening speed, but not so fast that cormorants couldn't surf the waters, waiting for hapless fish to be propelled their way. We saw our first bald eagle of the trip, soaring high overhead and, no doubt, looking for feeding opportunities below. You can keep on going on this trail for miles, as many cyclists who passed us were obviously going to do, but we had much more to see and returned to the RV after about an hour's walk.

Returning to Route 207, we headed for our next destination, Lawrencetown Beach, not far away. But on arrival, we found it still shrouded in late morning fog so we changed the intended batting order. First, we stopped in at Dude's Food, a brightly painted former school bus a few kilometres up the road, and each had a Dudewich, which was a burger bun crammed with a freshly fried piece of had-dock, cheese, tomato, lettuce and tartar sauce – delicious. Feeling

refreshed, we pushed on to the community of Seaforth, where we found the sign for Hope for Wildlife and, after driving up the lane and having to back down again, we parked at the entrance.

Hope Swinimer is an amazing woman who founded the wildlife rescue centre she calls Hope for Wildlife more than 15 years ago. Run entirely on grants, donations



and volunteer time, the centre takes in up to 2,500 wild animals every year, and rehabilitates most of them to return to the wild. Her task and ability to operate success-

fully was made much easier when the centre became the focus of the reality TV show *Hope for Wildlife*, which, in three short years, has achieved a worldwide audience on networks such as Animal Planet and Discovery. That has resulted in people from around the world volunteering for five-week stints at the centre.

By pre-arrangement, we were greeted by Hope, who gave us a guided tour of the centre, but the centre is open to any visitors every day but Sunday during the summer. There is a visitor centre, where animal ambassadors will explain the good work done here. While the actual treatment areas are not open to the public, there is much to see by



Lawrencetown is a big beach with several reefs close to shore...

just walking the grounds, including the first peace pole in Nova Scotia. Hope lives onsite in a somewhat ramshackle old farmhouse, so there is a good chance of running into her for a chat about her dedication to nature and helping all creatures, large and small. Admission is free, but donations are welcome.

Returning to Lawrencetown Beach, we found the fog burned off by a powerful sun, pushing the temperature into the 80s. On the approach to the beach, there are several surfing shops, and cars with boards on top become plentiful, for this is the surfing capital of Eastern Canada, and today was a perfect day for it. Lawrencetown is a big beach with several reefs close to shore that provide the right conditions for big breakers. We could see dozens of surfers, lots of sunbathers, and many families enjoying this

fine day. Junior is a reasonably proficient surfer, so he rented a board and wet suit and spent more than two hours riding the waves, while I explored the long beach from end to end, and took photos.

the Mi'kmaq people, who named the areas long before the Europeans arrived. Soon, Route 207 ended and we turned onto Hwy. 7, which we would follow for the next three days. Looking for an early breakfast, we passed through the village of Musquodoboit and stopped at the Tourist Trap, which was anything but. Housed in a well-preserved old house, it has a small restaurant and gift shop. The half fisherman's breakfast was more than enough, with a fish cake, egg, bacon, ham and really good home fries.

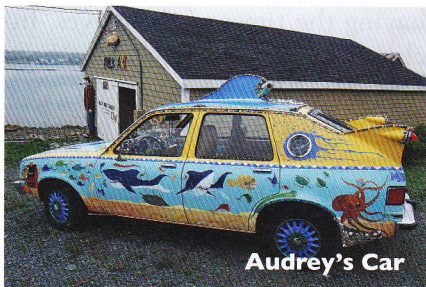
From Lawrencetown, it was a short drive to Porter's Lake Provincial Park, which was our first night's destination. Camped high on a ridge overlooking the lake, we reflected on the perfect day as the sun set in the west, and a crimson moon rose in the east. We could hear loons calling from the lake and the sound of crackling campfires all around – not a bad start to the trip.

Morning dawned clear and warm, but as often happens along this shore, the fog rolled in early. We had a strenuous day planned, so we decamped early and headed back to Route 207 to continue our journey. Looking for nourishment, we passed first through the Acadian communities of West and East Chezzetcook, the first of many with long, sometimes unpronounceable names that owe their existence to

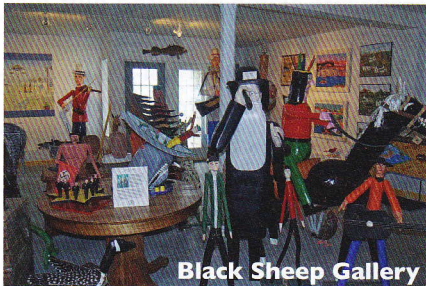
Ready for some exercise, we retraced our steps to the Musquodoboit Area Recreational Trails just outside the village, where there were multiple options available. The first was to cycle or hike the 14.5-kilometre section of non-motorized former rail bed that passes through some very scenic country on its way to the former community of Gibraltar. From here, there is a short, but steep ascent to Gibraltar Rock, and a panoramic view of the Musquodoboit River valley below. We chose instead to tackle the 4.5-kilometre Admiral Lake trail, which is a loop trail that starts just more than a kilometre from the start of the rail bed trail. On the way to the trail head, we could see a look off high on a bald rock and knew we had to get there. It turns out this was



Martinique Beach



Audrey's Car



Black Sheep Gallery

Skull Rock, the last of four look offs, the other three much higher. By this time, the fog had burned off and we enjoyed unparalleled views from each one, but it came only with three hours of very arduous effort. Next time, we might settle for Skull Rock and back.

After a short visit to the Musquodoboit Railway Museum, we headed for the beach again. Martinique Beach is the largest sand beach in Nova Scotia, and a favourite choice of many. Unfortunately, as we approached, we could see it was going to be fog-en-shrouded and expected few people

to be there — we couldn't have been more wrong. Every parking place was full and we were lucky just to get turned around and find a spot on the side of the road near the entrance. Despite the fog, it wasn't cold and the water was filled with bathers, surfers, kayakers, and even a lone canoeist riding the

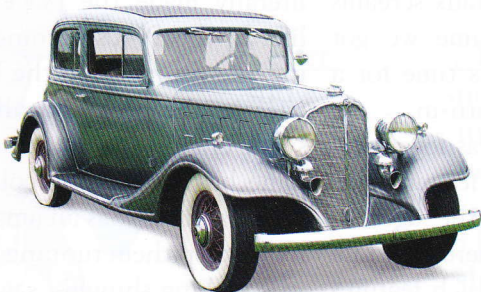
waves. The beach is so big and long that, despite the number of people, it really was not crowded. The farther up the beach I went, the fewer people I encountered, until there was just me and a great number of shorebirds.

The next stop was the Black Sheep Gallery in West Jeddore, where Audrey Sanford runs one of the best folk art galleries in Canada. It was impossible to miss as Audrey's car, parked outside, is a piece of folk art in itself, every square-inch festooned with pieces of glass, beads, buttons and other folk art materials. Inside the gallery is a riot of colour with brightly painted canvases, wooden sculptures, and mechanical marvels by folk artists from across Canada, but primarily Nova Scotia, including some very famous names. Prices range from \$6 to \$13,000, so there was something for every budget.

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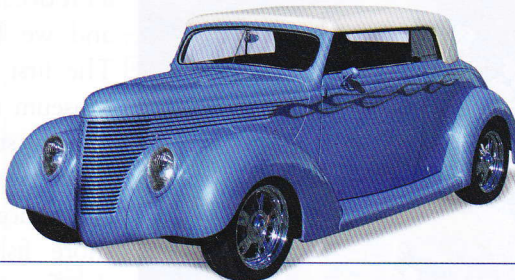
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The last stop of the day was Webber's Lakeside Camping on the shores of Lake Charlotte, one of Nova Scotia's largest lakes. It was the type of resort I remembered as a kid - simply tons of fun things to do and explore while making instant friendships with other children equally enthralled. We saw them swimming, fishing, playing badminton, running, biking, you name it - all with big grins on their faces, not realizing they really were

having the times of their lives. Included in the price was a one-hour non-motorized boat rental. We opted for a rowboat, with son as oarsman and father as captain. The lake near Webber's is quite narrow, with a sheer cliff on the far side. We rowed over to watch a group of teenagers clamber up the cliff face to a tree that grew almost straight out from the cliff about 20 feet up. After much posturing for the girls in the water below, they jumped to

solute fountain of interesting stories about growing up in a small fishing community. We were particularly intrigued by her stories of the ghosts that now lived in - but didn't haunt, she insisted - the house.

A short distance away, we came to Memory Lane Heritage Village, which is run by a non-profit society that seeks to preserve the history and way of life of the small communities in the area. The site has 14 buildings, of which 11 have been relocated from former locations. The society chose to focus on the era of the 1940s so the buildings appear, inside and outside, as they would have during that time. Not having had breakfast, our first stop was the cookhouse. There we had homemade soup and sandwiches made with delicious old-fashioned brown bread in an atmosphere reminiscent of the lumber camp cookhouses that operated in the area. Next, we were given a guided tour by Art Keeble, who described himself as a come-from-away, having lived in the area for only 30 years. Art was to Memory Lane what Martha Monk had been to Fisherman's Life - he literally made the place come to life. In the 1940s, mining, lumbering and fishing were the big industries in the area and all required small engines to operate. Memory Lane has an amazing collection of these, and Art has an amazing ability to keep them running. Whether it is making shingles, sawing wood or metal, crushing rock or building boats, Art has a machine that will make it easier. We had expected to stay about an hour, and ended up staying more than twice that time at Memory Lane, and could have stayed longer.

Our journey will continue in the next issue of *RV gazette*. **RV**



Fisherman's Life Museum



Martha Monk

howls of laughter and faux screams of concern. By the time we got back to the RV, it was time for a late supper and early turn-in.

The next morning was foggy and a bit drizzly, a good day for museums and we had two on the agenda. The first was the Fisherman's Life Museum in Jeddore, which features a fairly small house on a beautiful property that was home to several generations of the Myers family, in-shore fisherman by trade. While the first generation had a mere 7 children, the second had 13, every one a girl. The real star attraction was the curator, Martha Monk, a descendant of the Myers, and an ab-

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East Coast Odyssey

Part 2

Exploring Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore is a must.

By Dale Dunlop

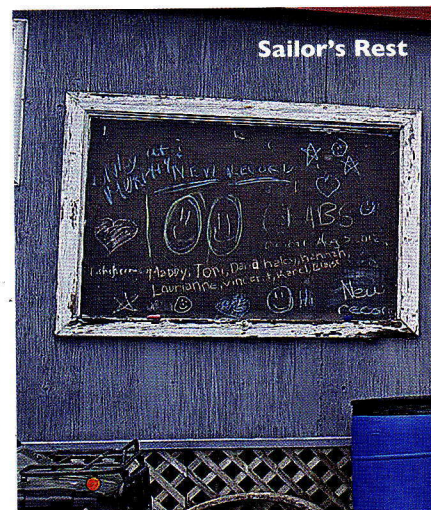
At the end of Part 1, my son and I had just left Memory Lane Heritage Village after a guided tour by Art Keeble.

Our next destination was the third, and probably the best of the popular Eastern Shore beaches, Clam Harbour. After the surprise of the large crowds at Martinique the day before, we were again surprised – this time there was only a single car in the parking lot, and a solitary couple on the large expanse of fine sand. The sand on this beach is per-

fect for building sand castles, and for almost 40 years an annual sand castle contest in mid-August draws dozens of entrants and thousands of spectators, but not today. Although it was still foggy, the air was not chilly and the water much warmer than Martinique or Lawrencetown. The downside was that the tide was high, and there was quite a noticeable riptide, so we opted for a short dip, followed by a walk to the end of the beach. Here, a coastal hiking path led to a series of sheltered

coves, some sandy, and others with shingle beaches. It was a very pleasant way to pass the afternoon.

We spent the night at Murphy's on the Ocean campground in Murphy's Cove, which has been around for more than 50 years. It has an excellent location right on the water, with some really nice spots. This area is well known for its mussel farms, and we had hoped to buy some for eating that night, but the business was closed when we arrived. It was a very pleasant



surprise to find we could buy them right at Murphy's, and, even better, to find we didn't have to because they held a complimentary mussel boil every night at dusk. This was a very sociable campground, and the Murphy's were great hosts. One particularly unique activity was the chance not only to fish from the wharf at the campground, but also to try to catch crabs by baiting small traps and waiting for the crabs to crawl in. The children loved it, and a blackboard announced that a new record of 100 crabs caught in a day had just been set.

The previous three days had been spent at three different beaches, and today was going to be the one during which we actually got out on the water. It started with a morning boat cruise captained by Mr. Murphy, who took us, and a family of five, out for almost two hours of sightseeing, storytelling, and fishing. We saw seals, osprey, eagles and some very beautiful scenery amidst the many small islands that dot the area. The look of delight on the face of one of the small boys as he caught his first fish was worth the price of the trip.

For the afternoon, we headed down the road to Coastal Adventures in Tangier, where Scott Cunningham has run a sea kayaking business for many years. He has written numerous books on the sub-

ject, and has traversed the entire Nova Scotia coastline by kayak. By pre-arrangement, we had booked a guide for an afternoon, and were soon out on the tranquil waters of Tangier Harbour with guide Robin, exploring some of the offshore islands in the area. The next four hours were among the highlights of our trip as we paddled through tranquil clear waters, where the ocean floor was visible up to 20 feet below. Robin took us to deserted island beaches once frequented by Aborigines, who summered in the bay for thousands of years, showed us islands where fisherman had once lived, and guided us through narrow passages not much wider than the kayaks. For Dale Jr., the best was saved for last, when she pointed to a large rock that hung over the water, and asked if he wanted to climb it and jump off. The two of them clambered up about 20 feet, and jumped into the clear and surprisingly warm water. We retraced our way to the departure point just as the fog rolled in.

On the road again, we stopped briefly at Willie Krauch's Danish Smokehouse, which has been famous for its smoked salmon for decades, and purchased some salmon and smoked trout, which we snacked on for the rest of the trip.

Our camping site that night was Spry Bay Campground, which,

somewhat surprisingly was not located on Spry Bay, but well back from the water. It was the first campground that was not almost full, but it was a pleasant enough location, made more so by the fact that after two days of fog, the sky cleared to reveal a brilliant starlit night, where the Milky Way was clearly visible, and shooting stars crossed the sky at least three times.

The morning dawned clear and bright, leading us to arrive early at Taylor Head Provincial Park, where we planned to hike and swim. Taylor Head is a promontory with a series of interconnecting looped trails; the longest hike, at 9 kilometres, circumnavigates the point, which was our mission. The term "rugged Atlantic coastline" is used, and this hike had just about every element one could imagine in a seascape – waves crashing onto resistant rock, throwing up spumes of foam, menacing looking reefs lurking just offshore, whirling seabirds, and the rattle of a cobble beach as the waves withdraw back to the tide line. Offshore, several sailboats plied their way. At the end of the point, all the trees, which were becoming increasingly smaller and withered, gave way to open grass and moss. This trail was not as arduous as Admiral Rock, but it was no walk in the park either – there were plenty of roots, stones, and wet spots

to navigate, but these worries were a small price to pay for the scenery on this trail.

When we got back to the parking lot, we changed, and cooled down with a refreshing swim at the beach, which was sandy, clear and cool.

Hitting the road just after noon, we stopped briefly at Sheet Harbour to follow the boardwalk at the information centre down to a pedestrian bridge, where there was a great view of a series of waterfalls cascading down the West River as it emptied into the sea. We then drove for just more than 50 kilometres to Liscombe Lodge, the largest tourism facility on the Eastern Shore. It has a beautiful location near the mouth of the Liscombe River, and a celebrated dining room. Here, we had a fine lunch while watching many species of birds visit the feeding stations just outside the restaurant windows.

Driving to our next destination, Sherbrooke, I couldn't help but notice that most of the tiny communities seemed to be on their last legs, with few or no facilities of any kind in most. Prosperity seemed to have left this part of the shore behind, at least until we came to Sherbrooke. It is a town with a foundation built on the many gold mines that thrived in the area in the 1800s. The architecture was decidedly different than anything we had seen on the trip so far. Not only was it uniform, but, it was clearly based on wealth. Being a boom town, the houses were built in fairly quick order, and, as with most gold mining boomtowns, Sherbrooke's fortunes rapidly declined once the gold ran out.

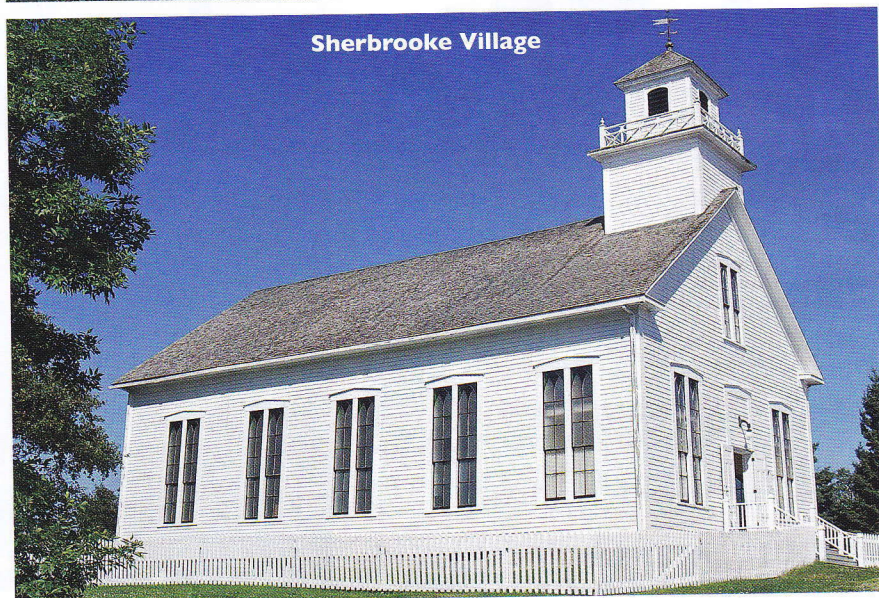
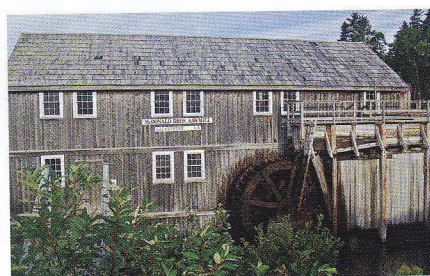
In 1969, the government realized it had an almost perfectly preserved collection of Victorian structures in a small area, and Sherbrooke Village was created. Unlike other

living museums, people do live full time within the village in their own private homes, but there are no overhead wires, satellite dishes, or other modernities to take away the illusion of stepping into the past. Today, there are more than 80 preserved buildings, with more than 25 open to the public, many of which are staffed by period-costumed interpreters.

There's nothing like seeing a boy riding a penny farthing bicycle down a dirt street to immediately get in the mood for visiting Sherbrooke Village, and that is exactly the first thing I saw as I set out on a three-hour exploration. Architecturally, the Temperance Hall, church, courthouse, and several of the Victorian houses were most interesting. From a human interest point of view, the blacksmith's shop, apothecary, and printer's office were all fascinating, but the real highlight was visiting the MacDonald sawmill.

Here, workers were cutting large logs with saws driven by a water wheel, no differently than was done here 150 years ago. Sherbrooke Village was the historical highlight of the trip.

We spent the night at St. Mary's Riverside Campground, which was right on the banks of the legendary salmon river of the same name, and only a minute's walk from the sawmill. It was the smallest of the campgrounds at which we stayed, so it didn't take long to get to know everybody. The most friendly chap was actually the owner's dog, Pat, a bichon frise, which repeatedly came to visit, looking to be



Port Bickerton Lighthouse



scratched or cuddled. The sun set amidst a red sky right over the river, making for good weather portents for the next day.

Our first stop on a busy day was the Port Bickerton Lighthouse Centre, which is based in the old lighthouse keeper's home. It has a map, historical data, and pictures of every lighthouse in Nova Scotia. In an adjacent building, there are replicas of many of the best-known lighthouses. From the top of the centre, where the light used to be, I could see a beautiful deserted beach in the distance. The centre has a number of trails, and one led to this beach, which was a wonderful find because we didn't know it even existed until a few minutes earlier. It took about 10 minutes to get there, and we were rewarded with yet another great Eastern Shore beach. There was nobody there but gulls that seemed to be having a crab feast, judging by the number of shredded shells. Also intriguing was a set of animal prints that came straight out of the water, and disappeared into the high grass, possibly a mink.

Talking to a couple of residents back at the lighthouse, we learned Port Bickerton's population had declined from more than 850 to less than 300 in just two decades. Apparently, this was typical of this part of the province.

Just after Sherbrooke, we had parted ways with Route 7 to follow Marine Drive on Route 211, which led us to the Country Harbour ferry crossing. The service was so casual that when a car drove up just after

we left, the ferry stopped, and backed up to get it. On the crossing, Dale struck up a conversation with an Aussie, and it turned out they had both worked in bars a block away in Banff, Alberta — small world.

On the other side, Route 211 ended at Route 316, which we followed through Goldboro to New Harbour, where there were thousands of migrating shorebirds bulking up for their long journey south. The next stop was a short one at Tor Bay Provincial Park to see the site where the first Trans-Atlantic cable from Europe to mainland North America came ashore. There were informative interpretive panels, and yet another great beach. After that, it was a pleasant drive through the Acadian communities of Larry's River, Charlos Cove, and Port Felix, all located on Tor Bay with the Sugar Harbour Islands on the horizon.

A short while later, Route 316 ended at Hwy. 16. We planned to turn left and follow Marine Drive, but a sign indicated the Last Port Motel was only 11 kilometres in the other direction. We had been told it had outstanding fish and chips, and decided to find out if it was true. It was, in spades, and definitely worth a detour. Since we had come this far, we then headed to the very picturesque village of Little Dover, where we found Black Duck Park. After a short walk on a



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very good trail, we came to a sign that indicated proceeding on further was extremely dangerous. Not seeing any imminent dangers, we walked on to find some very intriguing shoreline rock formations so regular in shape, that they looked as if they might be man-made, but upon closer inspection, were clearly natural phenomena.

Retracing our route took us past the isolated Queensport lighthouse, which was similar in shape to Port Bickerton, but on a barren island, well offshore. We were now traversing the south side of Chedabucto Bay, the largest on Nova Scotia's entire east coast. Cape Breton Island was visible in the distance, and would be for the rest of the trip. The scenery was certainly among the best we had seen, with forested hillsides running down to the pristine waters of the bay.

Soon we arrived at Guysborough, which is, without a doubt, one of the prettiest villages anywhere, with a prime waterfront location on a sheltered bay. First settled in 1634, it is one of North America's oldest settlements, and the subject of numerous small battles, first between rival French factions, and later between the English and French, the former of whom prevailed. Many of the residents are descendants of German and English soldiers who fought for the British during the American Revolution, and received land grants as tokens of thanks. We learned this from stopping at the Court House Museum, where the most interesting display is a huge banner from the Guysborough Total Abstinence Society that reads, "The eyes of all are upon you." I bought a T-shirt with a picture of the banner on it.

A stroll around town led us to the waterfront, where there is a marina and kayaks for rent, as well as the Rare Bird Brew Pub, and a local theatre troupe. Other sights included the impressive St. Ann's church, and the very large DesBarres Inn. Unfortunately, the day was getting late, and we had to move on to Boylston Provincial Park, where we would spend our last night. Located high on a hill overlooking Guysborough Harbour, the view from the deck of the check-in office was the finest of the whole trip, with a small white church hundreds of feet below. Our camping spot was also the best of the trip, with a private location right on a small lake, where we reminisced about our experiences of the week over one last campfire. And, as on the first night, we were serenaded by a loon as we tucked in.

The morning brought a short, but very scenic drive to the conclusion of Marine Drive, at the Trans-Canada Highway near the causeway to Cape Breton. The number of vehicles whizzing by was startling after a week of near deserted roads. We realized we had taken the road less travelled, and were the better for it.

*Author's Note: All of the roads we travelled were paved, but there were some rough patches, particularly on Route 316. **RV***



Campground Information

Porter's Lake Provincial Park: 888-544-3434, www.novascotiaparks.ca/parks/porters.asp

E&F Webber Lakeside Park: 800-589-2282, www.webberslakesideresort.com

Murphy's Camping on the Ocean: 902-772-2700, murphyscampingontheocean.ca

Spry Bay Campground: 866-229-8014, www.sprybaycampground.ca/drupal/

St. Mary's Riverside Campground: 902-522-2913

Boylston Provincial Park: 888-544-3434, novascotiaparks.ca/parks/boylston.asp