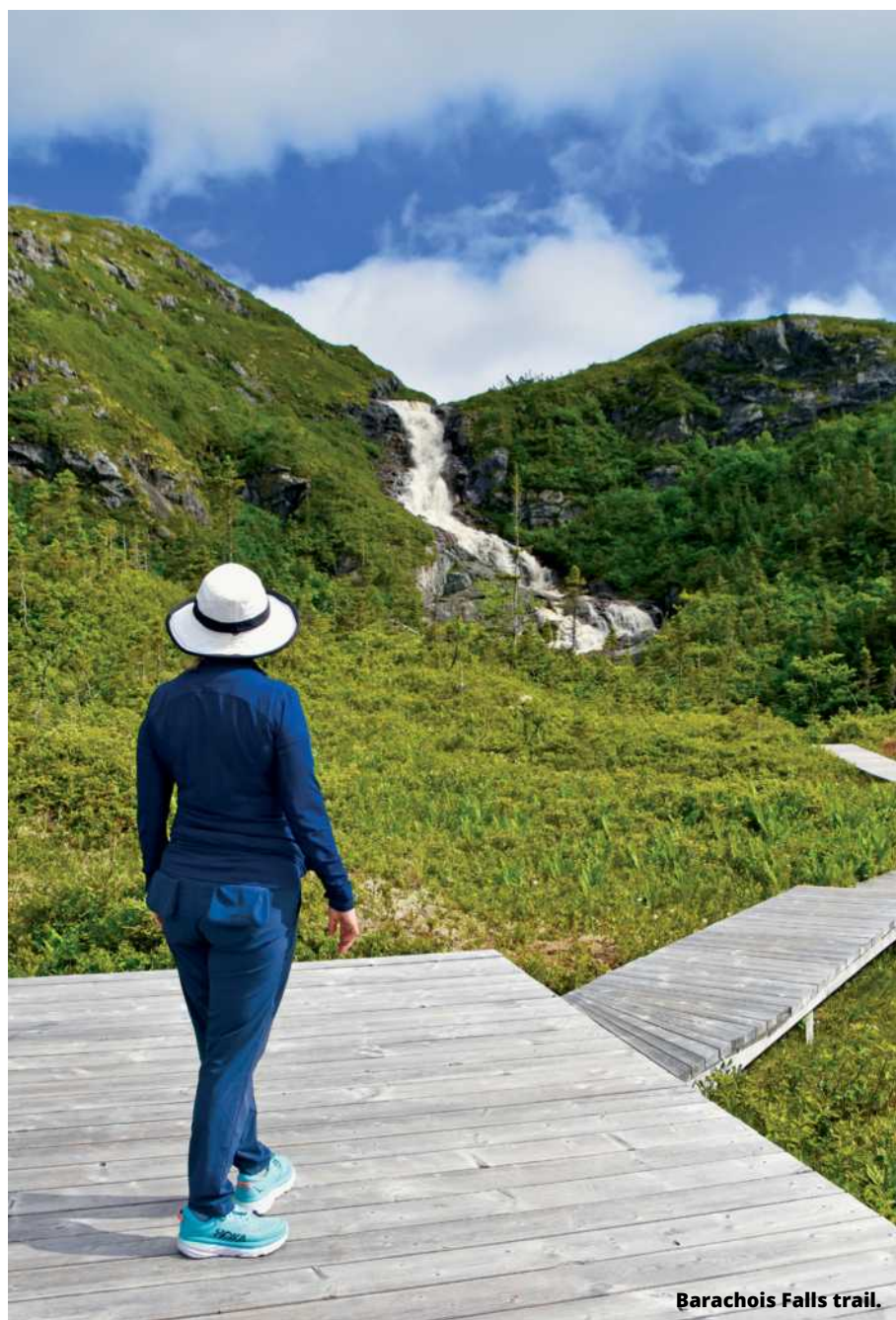


# Well worth a (side) trip

## Exploring Newfoundland's Granite Coast

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DALE DUNLOP



**Barachois Falls trail.**

**M**ost tourists who come to Newfoundland and Labrador by motor vehicle land at Port aux Basques and most of those head straight for Gros Morne and other well-known sites on the Viking Trail. That's too bad, because they are overlooking one of Newfoundland's hidden gems, the Granite Coast, which is a 45-kilometre short stretch that runs from Channel-Port aux Basques to Rose Blanche and Harbour Le Cou. Here's why your next trip to Newfoundland should start with a side trip to see a famous lighthouse and much more.

Route 470 heads due east from Port aux Basques while the Trans-Canada Highway goes in the opposite direction, and all signs out of the ferry terminal aim to put drivers on that route. However, by paying close attention and some apparent backtracking, you can get on Route 470 and within minutes find yourself in the open countryside.

The Granite Coast features small communities that are reached by short side roads, and most of these are worth exploring. The first stop is the village of Margaree, which is a name I always associated with Cape Breton. However, I did learn during this trip that a lot of Cape Bretoners migrated to Newfoundland in the 1800s, particularly to the southwest coast.

Along the Granite Coast, you reach the intriguingly named Isle aux Morts, which got its portentous name from the many shipwrecks in the area—that took so many lives, that the place was literally an Island of the Dead. Almost paradoxically, it gained a reputation for saving lives, through the exploits of the Harvey family and their Newfoundland dog Hairyman, who on two occasions rescued some 200 shipwrecked people from almost certain death. Thus was



The lighthouse was occupied for more than 70 years by various families and looks quite comfortable inside, with a cozy kitchen and bedroom. While you cannot climb up into the light, you can climb the spiral staircase as far as the base of the ladder that leads to the top.

Sherman Hines has published more than 70 books on photography of which by far the most famous is *Outhouses of the East*. I don't know if Sherman made it to Rose Blanche or not, but if he had, he surely would have included the lighthouse's outhouse in his collection.

Retracing your route back to Port aux Basques reveals vistas completely different from those on the way out and many more photo opportunities on Newfoundland's Granite Coast. 📷

born the legend of the Newfoundland dog. Today you can walk the Harvey Trail close to where these rescues took place and visit the Harvey gravesite on the way.

The Granite Coast from Isle aux Morts to Rose Blanche is narrow, twisty and oh so beautiful. This is a chance to appreciate the stark beauty of coastal Newfoundland. The highlight is almost certainly Barachois Falls, which you can reach in an easy 20-minute walk along a wide path that is mostly on wooden steps or boardwalk.

This was also the first place on the Granite Coast that we really started to notice the many amazing flowers and berries that are typically found in what at first appear to be nothing but barrens or scrub brush. It took my wife Alison twice as long as me to reach the falls because she stopped to take dozens of photos.

Not far past Barachois Falls, you come to the bumpy but short road to the La Poile passenger ferry, which services the tiny outpost with fewer than 90 permanent residents. While we didn't take the ferry on this trip, we did spend some time exploring the old cemetery nearby. Just as the outposts are slowly dying, so too is this

cemetery, which was becoming overgrown and eventually will all but disappear.

Contrary to what one would think, Rose Blanche is not a French version of white rose, but rather a corruption of the term *roche blanche* or white rock. That becomes evident at Diamond Cove, where you can see quartz veins wide enough to be noticeable from miles around. There are fewer people here now than in 1869, but the community does have one great thing going for it, the Rose Blanche lighthouse which is unique in Newfoundland—and most of North America, for that matter.

The lighthouse was built in 1871, but it's no ordinary structure. While the building itself was designed by the local lighthouse inspector, the lighting apparatus was designed by the legendary Stevenson family of Scotland, of whom the writer Robert Louis Stevenson was also a member and an occasional lighthouse builder's apprentice. After arriving at the small parking lot, you pay a modest fee and take a circular path to the lighthouse.



Clockwise from top: Rose Blanche Lighthouse; bedroom at the lighthouse; view of Port aux Basques from Margaree; abandoned cemetery.

