

## **Autumn in New Brunswick**

My seatmate on the plane from Los Angeles to Toronto was Pamela Anderson. She's Canadian and was presenting at the annual Toronto Film Festival. I was continuing on to New Brunswick, an hour and a half farther east. Some flights are longer than others.

It was mid September when I arrived and a chill was already in the air. The wind was up and summer was wary. The maple trees had recognized the crisp autumn days as well, and hues of orange and red were threading their boughs.

New Brunswick is one of the three Maritime Provinces of Canada that spin off the nose of Maine like a propeller. It is the closest, abutting the border and about the same size, with a population of 750,000.

It also possesses many of the same qualities; rolling farmlands, stately homes, covered bridges (64), a rugged coastline and abundant sea life. But It is the only province that recognizes two official languages, French and English.

The plane landed in Saint John, which is celebrating its 225th birthday this year, the oldest incorporated city in Canada. In 1783 the area was colonized by Loyalists from the American Revolution who had fought with the Red Coats and/or supported British rule.

After the war, 7,000 were forced out or left voluntarily and resettled on land separated from Nova Scotia. It was renamed for the German Duchy of Brunswick, then under control of England's George III.

New Brunswick is bordered by the Bay of Fundy on the south. The waters are cold year round, ranging between 38 and 44 degrees and it produces the highest tide in the world. Every six hours 100 billion tons of seawater swirl into the narrowing bay, raising it 40 to 52 feet. At Reversing Falls the phenomenon creates rapids as the tide rushes upstream.

The best place to view the world's highest tide surge is from the cliffs above Hopewell Rocks, east of Saint John. Over the years the tides have carved monoliths out of the sandstone, and left shrinking sentinels guarding the coast.

Herring are plentiful in these waters, supplying the canneries. They also support salmon, porpoises, whales, and a myriad of diving sea birds, from eagles to gulls.

Crustaceans love these frigid waters as well, which produce some of the best lobsters, oysters, clams and mussels in the world. I enjoyed seafood every day and especially relished the fried clams.

Salmon and sturgeon farming has also increased recently, developing a booming caviar industry that can bring up to \$80 an ounce for the osetra variety.

Lying next to Hopewell Rocks, Fundy National Park offers scenic hikes on paths which edge along the bay for 120 kilometers through the Acadian Forest, past waterfalls and crystal clear streams.

It was created in 1948, and features a beautiful golf course and a heated saltwater pool, unusual offerings for a national park.

The Fundy Trail Parkway is one of the last remaining coastal wilderness areas in North America. Breathtaking views and a variety of flora and fauna present themselves. This is Christmas tree country and spruce and balsam firs scent the woods. Deer and moose are abundant and were spotted on a number of occasions. Hunting season hadn't opened yet and they knew it.

Look for the "Interpretive Centre" in the parks, where you can receive printed information on trails, plants and wildlife, speak with knowledgeable staff and find refreshments.

Back in Saint John, I visited the City Market, the oldest covered market in Canada. It was here that I discovered the worst gastronomic experience of my trip, dulse. It's salty dried seaweed with a rank odor and vile flavor that is definitely an acquired taste. Locals eat it like potato chips and swear by its healing and aphrodisiacal properties. I say it's better used as plant fertilizer, insulation and fuel.

Saint John has also given the world a number of film icons including studio mogul Louis B. Mayer and actors Walter Pidgeon and Donald Sutherland, who are commemorated in the city on a wall mural.

The town of St. Andrews is one of the most beautifully preserved seaside resorts. It lies across from Maine and is where many Loyalists

originally settled.

On nearby Ministers Island, visitable only when the tide is out, you cross the stony seabed to the restored mansion of Sir William Cornelius Van Horne, builder of the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Don't dally, you have six hours before the tide returns and you are stranded.

From the docks at St. Andrews I took the Fundy Tide Runners 25-foot Zodiac boat into the bay for whale watching. It flies off the water when you approach 50 miles an hour and you do get soaked. But it's a blast and we saw over 20 whales and porpoises, dolphins, seals, bald eagles and other water birds and no one was lost at sea.

Fredericton, in the lower left center of the Province on the St. John River, is the Capital. I was there for the 18th Annual Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival, which drew 80,000 into the city over the five days and 350 musicians.

The music is performed at small and large venues throughout town and carries on late into the night. Attendees bring their instruments and there are impromptu jam sessions in every corner, bar and restaurant.

### **IF YOU GO:**

In the shadow of the Fairmont Algonquin Resort, the Province's most elegant hotel/spa, the Kingsbrae Garden offers a 27-acre horticultural display of 55,000 plants. The grounds are spectacular; featuring local flowers and fruit trees, and you can feed the furry Alpacas.

In the Maine border town of St. Stephen, chocoholics can satisfy their habit and tour the legendary Ganong Chocolate Museum. Established in 1873, they were the inventors of the lollipop, candy bar, heart-shaped Valentine candy box, chocolate filled cinnamon hard candies called chicken bones, and cellophane packaging.

Just outside of Fredericton is the Kings Landing Historical Settlement. This is a reenactment of pioneer life much like Plymouth Plantation, with a blacksmith shop, print shop, sawmill and farm animals of all sorts. Villagers wear period costumes and the Kings Head restaurant serves traditional meals.

The best lobster stew I tasted was at Elaine's Chowder House in St.

Andrews, the most creative lobster dish was served at Rossmount Inn by Swiss chef Chris Aerni. His world-class cuisine was the finest I had on my trip, the service was knowledgeable and the Inn is a beautifully furnished and restored turn of the century structure.

The best steamed lobsters were served by Ross Mavis at his Inn on the Cove in Saint John, which overlooks the bay. He is a cookbook author, columnist, lively raconteur and a former TV cooking show host.

The best mussels were served at Brewbakers in Fredericton, the best iced tea at Opera Bistro in Saint John, a fresh ginger and lemon beverage, best blueberries at McKay's roadside stand in Pennfield, best beer is Simon Jones Amber Ale, best fried clams at Parkland Village Inn, best ice cream at Europa Inn in St. Andrews and Opera Bistro makes its own gelato, best cinnamon bun at Kelly's bakery in Alma, and best public golf course lies next to the Fairway Manor House in St. Andrews, a country inn formerly owned by the Hiram Walker family of Canadian Club fame. Just walk out the side door and on to the fourth tee.

While in Saint John explore the architecture in the old city and take a tour of Trinity Church, the historic County Courthouse, the restored Imperial Theatre and the whalebones exhibit at the New Brunswick Museum.

**The New Brunswick Tourist Office, [www.tourismnewbrunswick.ca](http://www.tourismnewbrunswick.ca)** has information on hotels, country inns, spas, hostels and bed and breakfasts. There are brochures on guided and self-guided tours, lists of restaurants, festivals, and attractions, 800-561-0123.

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## **PHOTOS:**

1) Lobster boats wait for the tide to rise on the Bay of Fundy. (7091)



2) An early frost brings out color in the Maple boughs. (7047) (7125)



3) One of 64 covered bridges that keep snow off the roads in winter.  
(7032)



Bucolic farmlands are everywhere in this photogenic Provence. (7120)



Withering sentinels guard the coast along the Bay of Fundy (7083)



Whale watching