

Atlantic Canada

WAYS

Find an east coast trip to suit
all types, says Laura French

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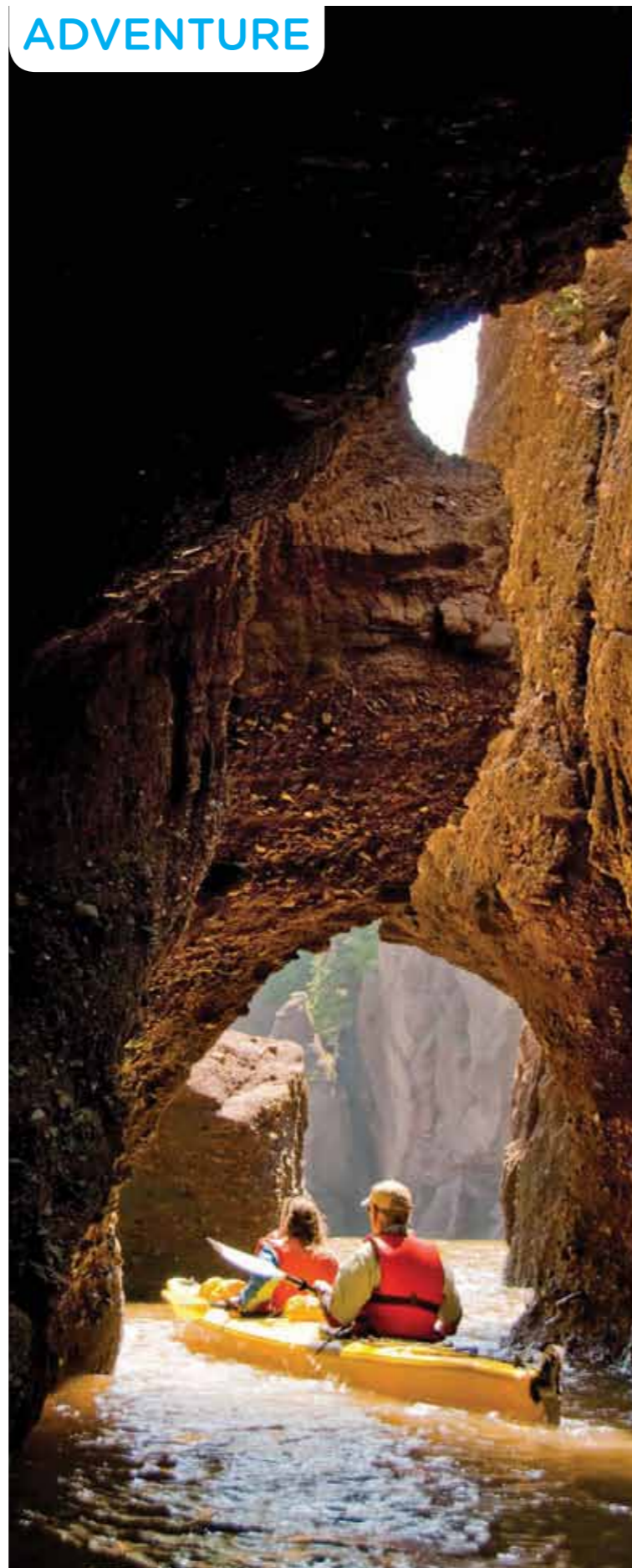
Picture Canada and the Rockies most likely come to mind. But if you only ever send clients to the west coast, you're missing a trick - it might be time to disregard the Pet Shop Boys' advice and go east instead.

In Atlantic Canada, clients will find a whole other side to the country. Rugged cliffs, whale-friendly waters, verdant farmland

and historic cities marry Celtic, Acadian and Mi'kmaq influences across its four distinct provinces: Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

From the keenest of whale-watchers to the most cultured of museum-goers, the hardest of adventurers to the heartiest of food-lovers, you can make it

ADVENTURE



BEACH



CULTURE





ASK THE EXPERT



Joanne Hollidge,
Cosmos

"Atlantic Canada's cities and national parks offer plenty for first-time visitors, including spectacular landscapes and a fascinating history. The flight time to Nova Scotia is just over six hours, and departures in June and September are especially good value."

appeal to a diverse crowd. It's just a case of knowing how to sell it – and whom to target.

ADVENTURE

"It's perfect for soft adventure and offers pretty much every outdoor experience you can think of, except snow sports," says Kelley Keefe, Atlantic Canada Tourism Partnership UK programme manager.

Travel 2 recommends adventure-seekers head to the rugged coastal landscapes of Nova Scotia – often compared with Scotland itself – for world-class golfing, whale-watching, hiking, biking and more. Among the province's most talked-about treasures is Cape Breton Highlands National Park, a giant collection of deep forest, plunging cliffs and intricate river canyons that span the northern coast.

The park offers 26 hiking trails, as well as ample sea kayaking opportunities, with tumbling waterfalls and camera-pleasing wildlife – from the Canada lynx to bald eagles, moose



ABOVE: Fundy National Park

and grouse – to watch out for.

It's also home to the world-famous Cabot Trail, a 190-mile road and cycle route that winds its way up through hilly forests before descending to the coastline, where breathtaking views over the surrounding seas await.

It's not only Nova Scotia that has an adventurous side. In New Brunswick, Fundy National Park draws in adventurers with yet more hiking and biking trails – this time through

the Acadian forest or wetlands – plus rafting and kayaking tours on the highest tides in the world. They can reach up to 16 metres and when the tide changes twice a day, the bore reverses the flow of the river, producing adrenaline-pumping rapids. For the fainter of heart, the Reversing Rapids Skywalk will open this year, offering dizzying views from above the falls with no need to get wet.

There's also fun to be had at low



tide. Denise Hunn, Prestige Holidays' Canada and USA programme manager, recommends walking the sea floor along the mud flats that line the Atlantic Ocean for a unique experience.

BEACH

Atlantic Canada abounds in dramatic coastline, which means there are plenty of beaches to boot. Nova Scotia alone lays claim to more than 120 accessible spots, alongside excellent seafood – think fresh cod, lobster and scallops – and swimmable sea temperatures.

"Clients can find some of the warmest beach waters in Canada along the Northumberland Strait," says Tim Greathead, senior travel expert and product executive at Premier Holidays. "Along South Shore, they'll find beautiful white-sand beaches that look almost tropical."

For a full day at the seaside, Iain Shields, product development manager for Grand American Adventures, suggests Bayswater Beach, where bald eagles, willets and plovers fly overhead.

From there, it's only a short hop to Peggy's Cove, a traditional fishing village that's famous for its lighthouse, picturesque views and ocean-side activities such as kayaking, bird-watching and golf. Cosmos tour Wonders of the Maritimes and Cape Breton invites guests to feast on a traditional Nova Scotia breakfast while taking in views of the lighthouse.

New Brunswick has its fair share of pleasant beach spots, while Prince Edward Island is covered in red-sand shores, sweeping dunes and kayak-friendly waters.

Newfoundland and Labrador is also home to more than 18,000 miles



Nothing beats seeing minke and humpback whales among huge chunks of floating ice

of coastline. Lumsden North Beach, Musgrave Harbour Beach and Sandy Cove are among the best, according to Keefe.

Minke, humpback and the endangered North Atlantic right whale can be found in Atlantic Canada, but nothing beats seeing them in Iceberg Alley, in between huge chunks of floating ice. If that doesn't beat your usual at-sea experience, nothing will.

CULTURE


The region has a unique concoction of cultural influences and Gaelic traditions brought over when Scottish Highlanders came in the 18th century. The Highland Village museum in Iona, Nova Scotia, provides an interactive insight into how these shaped the

region with storytelling tours, dressing-up and demonstrations, while the Ceilidh Trail from Charlottetown lines up Canada's first distillery with craft breweries and wine stops aplenty.

It wasn't just the Scottish who inhabited these landscapes, though, as the Maritimes were originally home to the Mi'kmaq hunter-gatherers, who still live on reservations here. Their 18th-century petroglyphs can be seen at the Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site, which is well worth recommending; Travel 2's Glimpse of Nova Scotia self-drive passes through this area.

Clients wanting to delve a little deeper can learn about their history first-hand from a Mi'kmaq native at the Millbrook Cultural and Heritage Centre in Truro. For that, suggest Trafalgar's Enchanting Canadian Maritimes tour, which also features a visit to a Mi'kmaq community in the Annapolis Valley and a trip to the Gaelic College in Baddeck.

Halifax, the capital of Nova Scotia, is home to museums, art galleries and an ancient fortress. To the south-west lies the historic town of Lunenburg, a Unesco-listed site boasting colourful architecture.

On Prince Edward Island, it's fiction that has sparked the interest of tourists the world over. The bottle-green fields inspired LM Montgomery's famous *Anne of Green Gables*, and visitors can get an insight into the life of the author and her red-haired creation while walking in her footsteps through the picturesque Balsam Hollow and Haunted Woods. Fans can even dress up as the character, or see her brought to life in an all-out musical extravaganza every summer at the Charlottetown Festival. Whoever said west was best? 



ADVENTURE

Grand American Adventures' New England & Canadian Maritimes trip visits Fundy, Prince Edward Island, Cape Breton and Halifax. Prices start at £2,729, including domestic transport and accommodation, departing September 3. Rock-climbing, whale-watching, fishing and biking cost extra. grandamericanadventures.com

BEACH

Insight Vacations' 12-day Landscapes of the Canadian Maritimes trip includes B&B accommodation, transfers, sightseeing, a guide and some meals. Prices start at £3,250, departing July 8. insightvacations.com

CULTURE

Trafalgar offers an Enchanting Canadian Maritimes trip, from £2,125 in July. The price includes B&B accommodation, transport, guides and signature dining experiences. trafalgar.com/uk

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