

# 48 HOURS

## ST JOHN'S

Food and wildlife fans will find something to love in North America's oldest city, writes Nikki Bayley

Just five hours away from the UK, St John's in Newfoundland is now even easier to access thanks to new seasonal flights by WestJet from Gatwick, Glasgow and Dublin.

There's plenty to explore in this pleasingly compact port city. The oldest and most easterly in North America, it boasts delicious seafood, a fascinating history, thriving Celtic culture thanks to the fishermen who arrived here in the 1700s, and iconic Canadian nature on its doorstep in the form of whales, icebergs and moose.

While they're visiting, clients can become honorary 'Newfies' when they kiss the codfish in a 'Screeching In' ceremony, and drink beer brewed from 25,000-year-old icebergs at the local Quidi Vidi brewery.

Best of all, in a country renowned for the politeness of its citizens and warmth of its welcome, Newfoundland stands alone for its genuine hospitality and friendly locals.

Dive into St John's and discover a whole new side of Canada.

### DAY ONE

**08.00:** Hit the ground running and head out on the Irish Loop which takes in the very best of Newfoundland's great outdoors, from whales and puffins to kayaking and lighthouse picnics. Fuel up on coffee and pastries at locals' favourite Rocket Bakery with its over-sized cinnamon buns and velvety coffee from Calgary's Phil & Sebastian roasters. Snap up jars of house-made Partridgeberry and Bakeapple jams, and if you've time, head back on Tuesday

afternoons for the live music lunches with local fiddle players. [rocketfood.ca](#)

**09.30:** In business since 1970, Stan Cook Sea Kayak is one of Canada's most reliable suppliers of good times. The two-hour classic tour includes a pre-trip safety orientation and plenty of reassurance for first-time kayakers. If the timing's right, you can paddle past awe-inspiring icebergs and spot whales flipping their tails across the bay. [stancook.ca](#)

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Take a boat cruise in Witless Bay Ecological Reserve, home to 300,000 pairs of puffins

**12.00:** Work up that appetite a little more with a gentle hike in Ferryland to visit its Lighthouse for one of its famous gourmet picnics. A terrific deal at a shade under \$30, you get a home-baked feast of piled-high sandwiches made with molasses oatmeal bread (I recommend the curried chicken), orzo pasta salad, fresh-squeezed lemonade in mason jars and a tasty dessert. Spread out on the blankets provided on the springy green grass and wait for the pre-booked picnic baskets

to arrive while you scan the horizon for whales and icebergs. [lighthousepicnics.ca](#)

**14.30:** Relax on the 40-minute trip back towards St John's as you head to Bay Bulls to sail out on a Gatherall's whale and puffin-watching tour. This family-run business, operating for more than 30 years, offers covered boat cruises out into the Witless Bay Ecological Reserve, known as the 'home of the Atlantic puffin' - some 300,000 pairs live there and it's the best →



→ place in the world to see these cute little birds. It's also one of the best places for the local humpback and minke whale to come and feast on capelin fish, so you'll have a good chance of seeing these incredible creatures breaching and rolling in the water. Even in summer this can get chilly, so advise clients to pack a hat and gloves just in case. [gatheralls.com](http://gatheralls.com)

**19.00:** It's just a 30-minute trip back to St John's so you have time for a rest before you head out on the final tour of the day with Cod Sounds to explore the food and culture of the city with its knowledgeable owner, Lori McCarthy. Lori takes small groups out on tours through downtown

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**Eat superb house-made charcuterie, crunch on pigs' ears and taste expertly prepared sushi**

St John's, visiting her chef friends for tasty treats at their restaurants along the way. Eat superb house-made charcuterie at Chinchéd and crunch on buffalo-style pigs' ears, sit at the raw bar at Basha as chef-owner Tak Ishiwata expertly prepares sushi and sashimi, then discover

your new favourite restaurant at the quirky and welcoming Reluctant Chef, where the charming Tony Butt holds court. [codsounds.ca](http://codsounds.ca)

▶ **DAY TWO**

**09.00:** Relax over a leisurely brunch at the Merchant Tavern and dig into local favourites such as salt cod fishcake with moose ragu. Make sure you order a touton – a divine crisp and fluffy fried dough treat with a side of sticky-sweet dark molasses. [themerchanttavern.ca](http://themerchanttavern.ca)

**10.30:** Walk off breakfast with a hike up Signal Hill, the site of St John's harbour defences from the 17th century. Along the way you'll pass the Geo Centre museum,

which focuses on the worlds of science and geology and has plenty of hands-on exhibits for kids of all ages. There's a great Parks Canada visitor centre and small museum at the top, along with a Newfoundland Chocolate Company cafe. Bag some of the chocolate bars featuring Newfie sayings like 'Lard Tunderin' or 'Oh Me Nerves' as fun souvenirs. While you're there, enjoy the irony of failing to get a mobile phone signal in the place where Guglielmo Marconi received the world's first transatlantic wireless signal in 1901. [geocentre.ca](http://geocentre.ca)

**12.30:** Keep walking to take in that gorgeous city and water view along the North Head →



08.00: Rocket Bakery



09.30: Stan Cook Sea Kayak



12.00: Lighthouse Picnics



14.30: Gatherall's whale and puffin-watching tour



10.30: Geo Centre

PICTURE: EGZIPOLJAT





ABOVE: Iceberg beer at Quidi Vidi

➔ trail to the incredibly picturesque Quidi Vidi village, (pronounced 'kiddy viddy' 'qwiddy viddy' or even 'qway-da vi-da'). This 16th-century fishing settlement is now home to artisan studios and stores, Newfoundland's largest microbrewery, which makes Iceberg beer, and the Mallard Cottage restaurant – the perfect spot for lunch. Make sure you leave room for the superb dessert buffet. [mallardcottage.ca](http://mallardcottage.ca)

**14.00:** Perched on a hill at the historic location which was once Fort Townsend, The Rooms is a multi-level arts and culture museum overlooking the city and housing the province's art gallery. Offering an excellent overview of the history of Newfoundland and Labrador from the indigenous First Nations through to early European contact, including the tragic story of Shanawdithit, the last member of the Beothuk nation. Along with the permanent collection there are plenty of visiting exhibitions too. [therooms.ca](http://therooms.ca)

**16.00:** Forget the malls and focus instead on local delights such as the Downhome store, which sells everything from moose-print socks and Newfie story books like *Jack Likes Salt Fish and Scrunchions* to gorgeous local art. Head upstairs for a selfie at the Moose Wall. For beautiful handcrafts try Nonia, which sells gorgeous knits like puffin-adorned socks and elaborate cable jumpers

handmade by women in outport communities to fund the salaries of public health nurses. [shopdownhome.com](http://shopdownhome.com) [nonia.com](http://nonia.com)

**19.00:** Go ultra-casual with globally influenced East Coast dining at Adelaide Oyster House. Alternatively, indulge in one of Canada's best 'locavore' dining experiences at Raymonds Restaurant and have the five or seven-course seasonal tasting menu to try Newfoundland delicacies such as snow crab, cod with fiddleheads and caribou moss, and bakeapple and seabuckthorn desserts. [TW](#)



## Where to stay

### SAVE

#### Leaside Manor

Characterful and cosy B&B with soaker tubs, four-poster beds and fantastic maple-soaked breakfasts included. Doubles from £100. [leasidemanor.com](http://leasidemanor.com)

### SPEND

#### Murray Premises

Dating back to the 1870s, this business-style hotel has solid wood fixtures and lavish marble bathrooms. Doubles from £110. [murraypremiseshotel.com](http://murraypremiseshotel.com)

### SPLURGE

#### JAG

This new ultra-funky classic rock-inspired downtown hotel (pictured) has spacious earth-toned rooms boasting Keurig coffee makers and huge cosy beds. Doubles from £130. [steelehotels.com](http://steelehotels.com)



LEFT: Nonia

RIGHT: Adelaide Oyster House