



Cross-border travelling

Two nation vacation

by Janet Wallace



I stood on a mountain peak and faced clusters of islands. With vistas of water in front and on both sides of me, it seemed as though I was on the prow of a ship. The cool breeze was refreshing, a treat after hiking through lush forests and clambering over rocks for hours. I was in **Acadia National Park**, Maine, the southernmost point of my two nation vacation.

At the northern end, at **Hopewell Rocks**, NB, I walked on the ocean floor amid 'flowerpot' rock formations seven stories high. Just six hours later at high tide, 40 feet (12 metres) of water covered my footsteps.

Downeast Maine and New Brunswick's Fundy coast share a common landscape, history and culture. It's in our nature to co-operate rather than compete, and so Maine and New Brunswick are collaborating to promote the "Two Nation Vacation" (two-nation-vacation.com). This coastal stretch spans 350 kilometres (220 miles) as the crow flies, but my journey was much longer, a circuitous route of windy roads that hug the shoreline and ferries to islands.

Timeless scenes

The largest of the Fundy Isles, **Grand Manan**, has a charm all its own. The island is filled with artisans and people who make a living from the water by fishing lobster, working on salmon farms or harvesting seaweed. Wherever I went, people greeted me with smiles and chatted as though I was a neighbour, not a tourist.

Clockwise from top left: Sunrise at Bar Harbor; rocks along the Fundy shoreline; Grand Manan, the largest of the Fundy Isles.



Clockwise from top: Herring weir at Grand Manan; children playing on the beach at Grand Manan; Bar Harbor, a resort town with fine restaurants, art galleries and historic inns; Beals-Great Waas Island, a nature lover's dream.



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I kayaked past the island's towering cliffs and herring weirs while porpoises leapt and dove around me. To the backdrop of sails slapping the wind, I saw right whales, an endangered species. Three amorous whales rolled like logs, part of their courtship ritual.

After returning to the mainland, I drove over rock and seaweed to **Ministers Island** to explore the summer home (i.e. mansion) of Sir William Van Horne, president of Canadian Pacific Railway from 1889-99. At high tide, the road is under water.

While exploring coastal roads in Maine, I came across a nature preserve on **Great Wass Island**, one of the 43 islands in an archipelago off Jonesport. A hiking trail meandered through a forest of tiny jack pines. Feeling like I was in Alice's Wonderland, I towered above mature trees whose roots snaked over huge boulders to reach the rare pockets of soil. The path culminated at a rocky shoreline with crashing waves—a typical scene on the two nation vacation.

At beaches, forests and cliffs throughout the region, there are places where I could look in all directions and not see a sign of human life. One day, my partner and I picnicked in dense fog. All we could see was the sandy beach and waves rolling in and out. Then a bald eagle flew out of the fogbank, low in front of us, carrying a crab. A timeless scene.

Shellfish is a highlight

At restaurants and fish markets, you can find succulent lobster, crab, scallops and clams. I had my first 'steamers' on a dock in **Bar Harbor**, Maine. While dipping steamed clams in melted butter, I watched yachts and schooners sail by. Bar Harbor, like **St. Andrews**, NB, is a resort town with fine restaurants, art galleries and historic inns.

For me, Downeast Maine feels like home, but with a twist. Part of the fun of the two nation vacation is spotting the differences between the countries while appreciating the coastal beauty and downhome culture we share.

The legacy of the herring fishery and canneries shapes **Eastport** and **Lubec**, Maine, and **Blacks Harbour** and **St. George**, NB. Currently, the lobster fishery supports communities such as **Alma**, NB. When the lobster season opens, hundreds of supporters come out for the launch of the fleet, even at 3am. Because of the extreme tides, boats can enter and leave Alma's harbour for only a short window of time. Time and tide wait for no man, particularly on the Bay of Fundy.

Interesting people

The coast attracts creative and independent souls. I have met potters and weavers, bakers and organic farmers, community activists and poets, who share a passion for life and a love of the region, regardless of which side of the border they're on.

The two nation vacation encompasses Maine's Acadia National Park and New Brunswick's **Fundy National Park**. In the middle, almost straddling the border, lies **Roosevelt Campobello International Park**. It's on Canadian soil (Campobello Island) but connected to Maine by a bridge. The park, which is jointly administered, staffed and funded by Canadians and Americans, contains an educational centre, restaurant, restored mansion and 1000-plus hectares of wilderness. With its natural beauty, interesting culture experiences and great food, the park is a microcosm of the two nation vacation. 🍷