

# Yup, you're in **Potato Country**

Don't just drive through the western corner of New Brunswick

by Janet Wallace



Tourism New Brunswick



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Top: Woodstock, the province's oldest town.

Left to right: Dine in a railway car at Fresh Fine Dining; have lunch at the New Brunswick Potato World Museum, learn about the main crop of this area; Visit the Malabean Centre's multi-media exhibit at Grand Falls.

**A**s I take pictures of the Saint John River, a sweet fragrance envelops me. I look around for roses or other flowers but only see fields of potatoes. Further down the road, I stop to admire a magnificent bridge and, again, the air is perfumed. I see acres of deep green plants with purple flowers and now identify the source of the aroma—potato blossoms.

This is the land of potatoes, bridges and big water. I am travelling along the western edge of New Brunswick from Woodstock to Grand Falls. My route criss-crosses the Saint John River, sometimes passing through covered bridges, other times going over modern structures. The land has a beautiful pastoral quality.

The communities are small, unpretentious and welcoming. For example, when I called the inn to say we wouldn't arrive until after six o'clock, the owner offered to cook dinner for us.

"It's no problem at all," she reassured me. And then asked if we liked hodgepodge.

We had left our place early that morning, visited an organic potato farm, got lost on back roads, and stopped countless times to take pictures of stunning landscapes. When we arrived in Florenceville-Bristol, we were hot, tired and hungry.

It was a relief to walk into the kitchen at Shamrock Suites and see a table for two with a pitcher of ice water. Moments later, Stephanie

returned with mugs of hodgepodge—a delicious blend of fresh peas, green beans, carrots and potatoes in light cream sauce. She had picked up the vegetables from a nearby farm stand that morning. Steak, onions and zucchini (grilled on the barbecue) followed. For dessert, we had blueberry buckle.

"I picked 10 pounds of blueberries today," said Stephanie with a touch of pride in her voice. She listed the types of berries she harvests and freezes.

This was the perfect end to our first day in western New Brunswick.

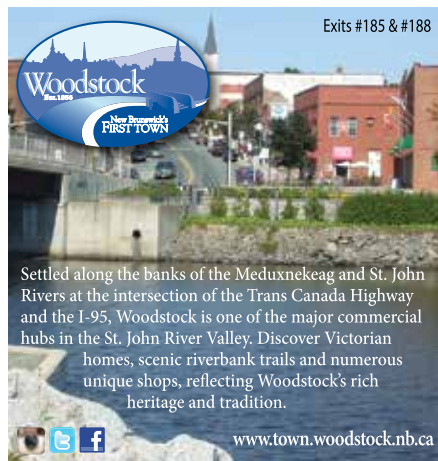
If you look at a map, you'll see a straight line a little more than 100 km in length separating New Brunswick from Maine. Woodstock is at the southern end with Grand Falls at the north. This stretch is often travelled, but many drive through without stopping. People coming from Ontario, Quebec or western Maine, pass through here on their way to Fredericton and Saint John (with the ferry to Digby, NS) or to Moncton and then PEI or Nova Scotia.

The fact the area doesn't focus on tourism is part of its appeal. Instead of the standard tourist offerings, you find an eclectic mix of quirky businesses. Here, you can enjoy fine cuisine in a converted railway car and then spend the night in a castle complete with a tall stone tower.

The Saint John River is the star attraction. Towns and villages dot

its banks. The bridges that connect them are testament to the thriving businesses of the past. Whereas current engineers would now place bridges far apart, this stretch of river has many opportunities to cross. Many of these bridges were first built when horses were the main means of transportation and travel was slow. Bridges allowed for commerce between farms, towns and villages.

Traditionally many bridges were covered; the wooden siding and shingled roofs protected the bridge deck from the elements. Also, it was easier to move livestock across the large river if they couldn't see the raging water below.



Settled along the banks of the Meduxnekeag and St. John Rivers at the intersection of the Trans Canada Highway and the I-95, Woodstock is one of the major commercial hubs in the St. John River Valley. Discover Victorian homes, scenic riverbank trails and numerous unique shops, reflecting Woodstock's rich heritage and tradition.

[www.town.woodstock.nb.ca](http://www.town.woodstock.nb.ca)

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Top: The Hartland Covered Bridge. Walk or drive over the longest covered bridge in the world.

Above: Watch chips being made and taste fresh chips at the Covered Bridge Potato Chip Company.

## On the ground

### Woodstock

Learn about the province's oldest town during a self-guided Heritage Walking Tour. Pick up a map at the town's library.

Appreciate the beauty of the Appalachian Hardwood Forest in the 120-hectare Meduxnekeag Valley Nature Preserve.

Hike the Maliseet Trail, part of the traditional canoe and portage route connecting the Saint John and St. Croix rivers.

Admire local art and have lunch at the Creek Village Gallery & Café.

Find local food at the Woodstock, Grafton Bridge and Hilltop Markets.

### Hartland

At the Hartland Covered Bridge National Historic Site, walk or drive over the longest covered bridge in the world.

### Florenceville-Bristol

At the New Brunswick Potato World Museum, learn about the main crop of this area.

Dine in a railway car at Fresh Fine Dining next to the Shogomoc Railway Museum.

### Waterville

Watch chips being made and taste fresh chips at the Covered Bridge Potato Chip Company.

### Perth-Andover

Hike part of the International Appalachian Trail starting at the US border and going towards Campbellton.

Stay or dine in the Castle Inn.

### New Denmark

Visit the small museum in the oldest Danish colony in Canada. Drive around and appreciate beautiful vistas of rolling fields of grain (and, yes, potatoes too) with mountains in the background (part of Mount Carleton Provincial Park).

### Grand Falls

Learn about the geological, cultural and socio-economic history of the area at the Malabear Centre's multi-media exhibit.

Feast on poutine at Jack's Fries on Broadway Boulevard, the widest main street east of Winnipeg.

Explore the Grand Falls Gorge with Open Sky Adventures by zip-lining, deepelling, kayaking or just taking a peaceful boat ride.

Zipline across the rapids with Zip Zag.

### Knowlesville

Learn about art, nature and gardening at the Knowlesville Art & Nature Centre. The centre hosts workshops for lifelong learning and classes for children.

Great things are happening... Exit #153

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Outdoor Summer Market

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