



Atlantic Coast of Canada – Labrador, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia

At 18.00 on September 2nd, with a weather window opening for us, we set sail for Canada, crossing the infamous Davies Strait. We left Greenland with a satisfied feeling, although we certainly missed a lot of magic in this huge country, where one could explore for years...

On September 7th Canada would open its borders for non-US foreigners, and we wanted to be first in line.

Land in sight! – Labrador

With a force 3–4 wind steadily pushing us in a Southwest direction, we were



accompanied by large pods of pilot whales, crossed the path of a hunting Orca, and after 3 days and 600nm, Canada was in sight, the rugged rocky coasts of Labrador an inviting landfall. We anchored in Nain (56°33'N – 61°41'W), hoping to get in contact with the authorities, in order to clear us in. But



unfortunately we arrived on Labour Day, even the police didn't pick up their phones...

Early morning the next day news reached us that hurricane Larry was on his way to Labrador and Newfoundland, for the first time in more than 10 years a hurricane would come that far North. We had 4 days to head South, in search of a safe haven to ride the storm, or stay put in Labrador, without being allowed on shore.

Hugging the shores of Labrador, finding our way between hundreds of inhabited islands, with an occasional cabin showing a sign of human presence, we spotted some black bears and some whales crossed our bow. We were in for a long ride, as the distance from Nain to the Lewisporte, the first official Port of Entry Canada, was longer than our crossing from Greenland.



Newfoundland

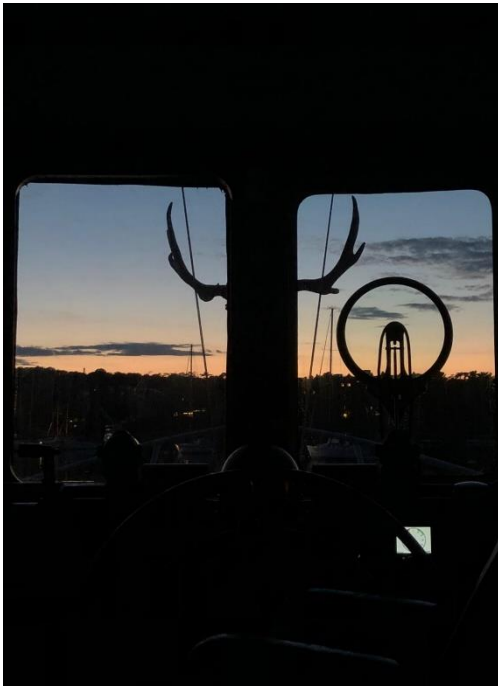
Large groups of dolphins and the occasional humpback whale guided us towards Belle Ile and Newfoundland. The joyful sight of the dolphins reminded us of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy :

"For instance, on the planet Earth, man had always assumed that he was more intelligent than dolphins because he had achieved so much—the wheel, New York, wars and so on—whilst all the dolphins had ever done was muck about in the water having a good time. But conversely, the dolphins had always believed that they were far more intelligent than man—for precisely the same reasons."



After four days of heading South, with the winds of Larry already picking up, we entered the safety of Notre Dame Bay, to find a jetty in the largest marina of Newfoundland, Lewisporte (49°15'N – 55°03'W). The first night we had potato wedges and chicken wings, to reward ourselves for the hardship suffered during the crossing. Little did we know that this would set the standard of most dining places in Newfoundland...

We were welcomed by the most friendly people we had seen in months! The largest pride of inhabitants of Newfoundland (pronounce like 'understand') is probably their hospitality. While we waited to get cleared in for 4 days, we were



spoilt by Max and his wife, who brought us home-made bread and jam, muffins, black berries, frozen cod, squid, mackerel and by Brian, the harbourmaster, who donated kilos of deep frozen moose sausages and minced meat and cod tongues. Luckily our freezer had some space after 10 days of crossings!

In Port aux Basques, our last stop in Newfoundland, we met Robert, who gave us moose antlers, to add to the horns of Caribou Kevin, our souvenir from Greenland.

Newfoundland, some (fishing) history

Although the remains of Viking settlements have been found in the North of Newfoundland, dating back to the year 1000, the Vikings left the new continent after a few years, without leaving any descendants.

The colonisation of the Atlantic Coast of Canada started when John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto, of Italian descent), commissioned by the British King to find a new route to India, arrived in Newfoundland in 1497. He hurried back to Europe to report on the immense amount of fish he spotted. "You could catch a 60 kg cod just by putting a bucket in the water..."



In the following years large fleets left Europe in spring to fish in these rich waters, cleaning and salting the fish on board. Portuguese, French, English and Irish fishermen suffered months of hardship, wet feet and cold to bring back this white gold to their home ports.

In order to increase production, summer settlements were installed, where the fish was cleaned, salted and air dried on huge wooden platforms. Some settlers were left behind in winter to protect their installations from the competition, and small villages slowly arose in the most protected coves and bays. While the men were fishing, mostly women and children would take care of the salting and drying. With the settlements came the tradesmen, who opened up trade stations, where fishermen could exchange cod for fishing gear and groceries, without the need for money to cross the counter.

To get through the long cold winters, the first settlers hunted for caribou and moose, and seal fat was used as lamp- and cooking oil. The hunt for seals was



particularly dangerous, as the hunters had to get their boats into the ice and chase the seal on foot, over the floating ice.



This cod race resulted definitely in one of the first migration streams from Europe to The Americas, with English, Irish, Scottish, Basque, Portuguese and French settlers each setting up their own stations.



St John's, the capital of Newfoundland, is known to be the first city in North America. It was established by the English in 1630, although it had been a non-permanent settlement since early in the 16th century.

For centuries the quays of settlements like Bonavista, St John's and Port au Basques were crowded with sailing vessels, who would fish with small dories using lines and nets.



The invention of the ship's engine, modern refrigeration and deadly efficient fishing techniques used by massive foreign fishing fleets, depleted the historic Grand Banks and Newfoundland waters from the fish. As a result the Canadian government was forced to install a complete ban on cod fishing in 1992, and the economy of Newfoundland collapsed, entire villages were abandoned and resettled by the government and the population in most coastal outports has been decimated since, with mainly young people leaving in search for work.



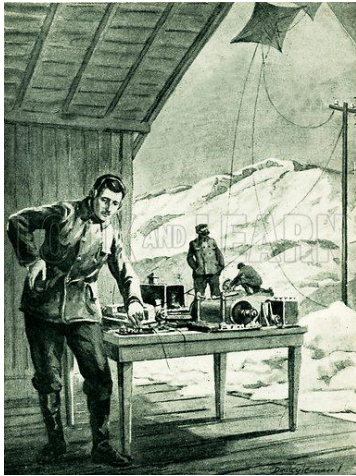
The Ryan Premises National Historic Site in Bonavista depicts very well this history of 500 years fishery and development of Canada's East Coast.

Newfoundland, some (geographical) history.

With a total surface of 108.000 km², Newfoundland is larger than e.g. Portugal or Iceland, and almost four times bigger than Belgium. Cape Spear, just south of St John's, is the closest point between America and Europe, with just 1650 NM to Dingle Bay in Ireland.



In 1850, the first transatlantic telegraph cable was installed between Newfoundland and Ireland, but due to the rough seabed, with high underwater mountains and



sharp edges, the cable only functioned for 14 days and it took 15 years for the next successful attempt. Nowadays, a large part of the telephone and data cables linking Europe to America leave from the shores of Newfoundland.

In December 1901, Marconi sent the first radio signal across the North Atlantic, raising an antenna with a kite above the cliffs of Signal Hill, just North of St John's.

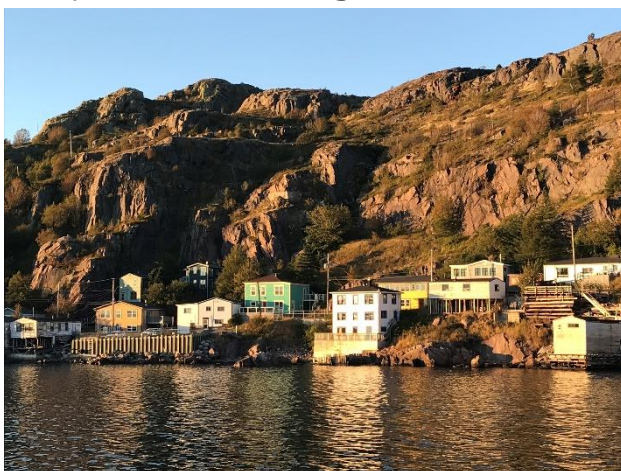
On April 14th, 1912, at 10.25 pm, the radio of Cape race received the first radio distress call from the Titanic, who struck an iceberg 400 NM east of Newfoundland. Titanic was equipped with the latest Marconi Radio station, which might have saved the lives of many passengers.

In 1919, two British pilots managed to complete the first non-stop transatlantic flight, starting in St John's, and crash landing in Clifden, Ireland, earning 10.000 GBP prize money, that had been offered by the Daily Mail in 1913.



In St John's we followed the trail along the Northern shore towards Signal Hill, where you have a magnificent view of the North Atlantic Ocean.

Compared to the fishing settlements like Bonavista and Seldom on Fogo Island or



Fortune, where the fish factory is the only anchor point in the village, St John's is the economic heart of Newfoundland, with taxi's, shopping malls, restaurants, industry, a large naval base and urban life.

There are more than 100kms of walking trails throughout the city, bringing you to the most beautiful spots.



We were sad to see Arne and Olivia go back to Belgium from here, after more than a month of their company. With only a skeleton crew of three, Monara set sail for the South Coast of Newfoundland, with Burin, Fortune, the Ramea Islands, Burgeo and Port aux Basques on our route.

By the end of September we decided to head for Nova Scotia, hoping to get our USA visa in our passports in the American consulate in Halifax.

We left Newfoundland with mixed feelings, on one hand possibly the most hospitable and friendly people we met along our travels, on an island with an overwhelming history and natural wealth, on the other hand an economy that has crashed 30 years ago, and never really picked up again for most of the inhabitants.



Nova Scotia

Cape Breton Island, situated in the North of Nova Scotia, rightfully claims the name of the most beautiful island in Eastern Canada. We entered the Bras d'Or lake in the North, to arrive in Baddeck, after a 30 hour crossing from Newfoundland.

Suddenly, from the Newfoundland fishing villages, we arrived in an active touristic setting, with a range of restaurants, hotels, busses driving people around the Cabot Trail and beautiful houses with manicured gardens. The Baddeck yacht Club is very



active, with small classic sailing yachts competing with their modern counterparts in weekly regatta's.



In Bras d'Or lake, we found the most secluded anchorage in Cape George Harbour, tucked away in the middle of the woods. As we carefully entered the cove after nightfall, it was only in the morning that we discovered the wealth of our surroundings, which we explored by canoe.



Leaving Bras d'Or lake through the St Peter's Canal, a beautiful small lock system



operated by hand that connects the Bras d'Or Lake with the Atlantic ocean. The lock operator is known to lend his car to passing boats who need groceries, and the story goes that he has never had to fill his fuel tank, so far.

We anchored off d'Escouse, where we enjoyed the hospitality in the local restaurant, still open at the end of the tourist season. The restaurant owner explained that, since the beginning of Covid, there

has been a rush for seafront real estate in Nova Scotia. People from the major cities in Canada started working from home and decided that they could escape the city. Selling their expensive city property, they arrive in Atlantic Canada with a big bag of money, and outbid each other. Prices have doubled in the last three years.

From d'Escouse we continued South West, rushing to Halifax, as we applied and paid for US visa online, and were expecting to get an appointment in the US Consulate for an interview.



Autumn in Halifax is magic, and entering the Northwest Arm of the bay breathes luxury and wealth. Lined with stunning waterfront houses, each with their own jetty, classic boats on moorings, sail training still going on at 19.00, people rowing from 06.00 with headlights on, beautiful



parks, dressed in five autumn colours, on both sides of the water. We hadn't seen a major city in months, so the sight of people jogging, walking their dogs in the evening sun and cycling through the parks, was overwhelming.



We found a place on the fuel jetty of the Armdale Yacht Club, and could finally give Monara a good scrubbing, after almost three months of cruising. Situated on a peninsula, the club house is the old Governor residence and the storage is situated in the oldest army

prison of Halifax, with heavy iron doors and tiny cells telling their own stories. When we arrived on October 4th, all the moorings were occupied, and the marina was full. By the time we left Halifax three weeks later, the Yard manager Larry and his team had hauled out almost all the boats, placed them on wooden sleds and dragged them to their place in the yard, for winter storage.

We will save the reader from most of the visa saga, but the American Consulate in Halifax never allowed us to make an appointment, we were forced to take a flight to New York to get our passports stamped. As the border between Canada and the USA remained



closed for private yachts until further notice, we decided to head for the French Island of Saint Pierre, situated off the Newfoundland coast, to then return directly to Eastport Maine to get cleared in. It appears that the Saint Pierre to USA border crossing was never closed due to Covid, so this was the only way of entering the US in the North.



On our trip from Saint Pierre to Eastport, we were forced to seek shelter in Louisbourg and in Lunenburg in Nova Scotia, as two force 8 autumn storms passed our path.

The Fortress of Louisbourg is a National Historic Site and is a partial reconstruction of an 18th

century French fortress at Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. Walking through the cobbled streets, with meticulously rebuilt houses, takes you back in time. Its two sieges, especially that of 1758, were turning points in the Anglo-French struggle for what today is Canada, where the North of Nova Scotia became a French region, and Halifax was built to protect the English interests.



In Lunenburg, a Unesco World Heritage site, more than 70% of the original houses still exist and have been beautifully renovated.



We were lucky to walk through the city on Halloween night, after torrential rains, with a thin fog surrounding us, creating just the right atmosphere.

As the tourist season is over, the Lunenburg citizens seemed to finally take over their village again, going from door to door, dressed up for Halloween, the children begging for candies.

We left Lunenburg, Nova Scotia and Canada at 04.00 on November 1st, heading for Eastport USA, as we received the green light that we could cross the border and enter the United States.

Labrador, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia showed us three different aspects of a beautiful country, with the most friendly and big hearted people so typical for Canada. In each and every harbour, we were offered a ride several times a day, in case we needed anything. As a result we have been able to share some of the biggest pickup trucks around, because they are part of Atlantic Canada just as well.



As we didn't always have the best photographers on board, we have taken the liberty to get some pictures from the internet, just to show the right atmosphere.

