

Totally Charmed – St. Andrews-by-the-Sea

By Chris Robinson



There is nowhere in Canada quite like St. Andrews-by-the-Sea.

It's a place where history hasn't simply touched and moved on – its gentle caress remains everywhere you look in this delightful seaside resort town.

St. Andrews-by-the-Sea is perhaps best known these days as one of the best whale-watching places on the globe. From its little harbour you can set out in cruise boats, catamarans and

zodiacs to see these wonderful ocean mammals in one of the marine wonders of the world – the Bay of Fundy and its picturesque buddy, Passamaquoddy Bay. A close encounter with one of these creatures is a truly moving experience (I remember with particular fondness a mother fin-back and her calf playfully frolicking one perfect late June morn-

ing), but in the rush to take to the waves, too many visitors neglect to leave enough time to savour the picturesque charm of the town itself.

And charmingly, the town started as a bit of a mistake. When it was founded after the American War of Independence, the original Loyalists were more than a little peeved to find out that a subsequent international border decision had left them in the United States. Undaunted, they



simply disassembled their houses, loaded them onto barges and set sail across the bay for what is now St. Andrews. There are still fourteen buildings dating back to the 1700's.

As Loyalists, they naturally named almost all the streets for George III and his family, including King, Queen and Prince of Wales Streets. They also laid the groundwork for what was to

become a marvelous architectural treasure chest that has survived remarkably intact into the 21st century. A gentle stroll along Water Street and the

adjoining blocks reveal styles ranging from modest salt box and Cape Cod houses to grand Georgian townhouses. Several of the older commercial buildings close to the waterfront have gable ends facing the street, such as you might see in the older parts of Bergen, Norway. And the meeting of Montague and King Streets is reckoned by many to be the most perfect street intersection in the country.

It's worth taking a day or two to leisurely enjoy all that this magical place to offer. Be dazzled by the gleaming white Charlotte

County Courthouse which dates back to 1840 and is the oldest courthouse in continuous use in Canada. Enter into the spirit of the early 19th century with the costumed guides at the Sheriff Andrews 1820 House and Garden. Take time to smell the roses in Kingsbrae Garden, an exquisite gem of a garden on 27 acres within the heart of the town. And leave time to explore the

Blockhouse, the last of twelve built to defend the area in the War of 1812.

Many of the craft and antique shops have taken root in some of the historical buildings.

There are excel-

lent buys in pottery, woolens and hand-blown glass and St. Andrews is good antiquing territory. The Ross Memorial Museum with its early 19th century furnishings is particularly recommended.

Even the accommodations in St. Andrews are part of this historical tapestry. There are several splendid inns, including The Windsor House Inn on Water Street, which was built in 1798 by Sea Captain David Mowat for his wife and ten children, and the Treadwell Inn, also on Water Street, which was built in 1820 for a ship's chandler. But the icing

on the cake is most certainly the elegant Fairmont Algonquin Resort. This legendary hotel is immaculately perched upon manicured lawns on a hill rising above the town. To take tea here is to comfortably relax back into a genteel, gentler time.

So come to St. Andrews-by-the-Sea and by all means sail out into Passamaquoddy Bay to see the whales. But leave lots of time to simply wander wherever your feet take you around this historical pot-pourri.

For, quite simply, the place cannot fail to leave you – totally charmed.

Travel Notes

St. Andrews-by-the-Sea is just over an hour south of Saint John. Whale-watching trips cost from \$40 to \$50 per person, June to October. Kingsbrae Garden is open May 14 to October 9, admission is \$8.50. Room rates at Windsor House start at \$225, the Treadwell Inn: \$145 and the Fairmont Algonquin Resort: \$209

Insiders tips: Consider booking accommodation and activities in advance in July and August. For families, visit the Atlantic Salmon Interpretive Centre which features an in-stream aquarium and boardwalks in a woodland setting, and the Huntsman Aquarium-Museum with its touch-tanks full of interesting marine life. This summer look out for celebrations marking the 400th anniversary of the first attempt at permanent French settlement in North America which occurred at nearby St Croix Island in 1604.

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