



St. John's



Most people don't come to Newfoundland for city life, but once in the province they invariably rave about St. John's. The city is responsible for a good part of the province's economic output, and is home to Memorial University. The 2006 census has the city population at a modest 100,000, but the metro area count is 180,000 and fast-growing.

St. John's is a region unto itself. It was the capital of the Dominion of Newfoundland and Labrador prior to Confederation with Canada in 1949. As such, it retains elements (and attitudes) of a national capital and is, of course, the provincial capital. St. John's claim to be the oldest European-settled city in North America is contested, however, it is clear that it was an important fishing port in the early 1500s and received its first permanent settlers in the early 1600s. Moreover, there is no doubt that Water Street is the oldest commercial street in North America. Formerly known as the lower path, it was the route by which fishermen, servants, and traders (along with pirates and naval officers) moved from storehouse, to warehouse to alehouse. They did so in order to purchase or barter the supplies necessary to secure a successful voyage at the Newfoundland fishery.

Centuries later, the decline of the fishery negatively affected St. John's, but oil and gas discoveries, and a rising service sector, have boosted the city's fortunes. For visitors, St. John's memorably hilly streets, fascinating architecture, and spectacular harbour and cliffs make it the perfect place

to begin (or end) a trip to Newfoundland. There is plenty to see and do in St. John's, and music lovers are invariably impressed. It's common to walk into one of the city's many pubs and hear first-rate musicians, who typically relax at the bar enjoying a pint once the set is done. St. John's weather can be chilly, but it's a warm city rich in character and characters.

Rooms With a View

1



COURTESY OF THE ROOMS CORPORATION

The Rooms complex houses the provincial archives, art gallery, and museum, and showcases Newfoundland and Labrador's fascinating history. In addition to the extensive permanent collection, there are traveling exhibits from outside the province, and programs and events for all ages, including a retelling of the Irish uprising of the 1800s with a Punch and Judy show. While many seek out The Rooms for its historical and archeological displays, the art gallery is also first-rate and contains more than 7,000 items.

The Rooms opened in 2005 and its salt-box design commemorates Newfoundland's traditional fishing "rooms." These rough structures were used to store and process fish, as well as house nets and other gear. The modern

Rooms are perched on a hill and, along with St. John the Baptist Basilica, dominate the St. John's skyline. Because of the contrasting architecture between The Rooms and the Basilica, The Rooms have been denigrated by some as "the box the Basilica came in." Opinions may vary concerning the architecture of The Rooms, but everyone agrees that the views of St. John's and the harbour from the complex's fourth floor are remarkable. The Rooms Café is a great place from which to take in this sight, but go early; the Café (more fine dining than snack bar) doesn't take reservations and is a busy place.

Underneath The Rooms lie the remains of Fort Townsend, a star-shaped citadel, which was once among the largest British fortifications in North America. It was built to defend Britain's fishing interests and, with the withdrawal of the imperial garrison in 1870, became the home of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and, later, the St. John's Fire Department.

Details: *The Rooms is located at 9 Bonaventure Avenue (it can be seen from all over the city). Open year-round. Tel (709) 757-8000. www.therooms.ca.*

2

Cape Spear

Cape Spear is home to the oldest surviving lighthouse in Newfoundland. It has been restored to its 1839 appearance and designated a Canadian Heritage Site.

In some ways, Cape Spear is the Peggy's Cove of Newfoundland, except that it has no village and no big tourist centre. Instead, it has impressive rocks and waves, and WWII-era bunkers, tunnels and pill boxes.

There are also visiting whales and icebergs, and, if you look hard enough, you can imagine Ireland on the other side (Cape Spear is the most easterly point on the continent).

For a mystical experience not to be missed, join the dawn-seekers at Cape Spear who watch the sun rise out of the ocean to start its North American journey. During the summer months, you'll find scheduled live music, readings, and theatrical performances at the site. Not to worry, however, the activities, small gift shop, and visitors centre do not detract from the raw beauty of the place. Heed the signs as the Cape's magnificent waves can be deadly. And bring a picnic: No food is available at Cape Spear.

Details: *Cape Spear is a 10-minute drive from downtown St. John's; follow the signs at the west end of Water Street across the Harbour Arterial and up over the hill. www.capespear.ca.*



TAKE 5 GREG MALONE

FIVE FAVOURITE NEWFOUNDLAND EXPERIENCES

Greg Malone is an award-winning comedian and Newfoundland icon as a former member of CODCO and The Wonderful Grand Band. He is also an actor, director, writer, and a political activist. Malone is a 2002 recipient of the Earle Grey Award, the lifetime achievement award of Canadian television's Gemini Awards. His new book, *Don't Tell the Newfoundlanders*, is an in-depth and often shocking account of the conspiracy and secret negotiations between England and Canada that resulted in Newfoundland's 1949 Confederation with Canada. Malone's 2009 memoir, *You Better Watch Out*, is about growing up in St. John's. He can be reached through www.wonderfulgrandband.com

1. Picking Blueberries on Moon Pond Ridge

This is as enchanting an experience as it sounds. That was many years ago now and the berry grounds there (not far from Torbay) may have grown in, but they will have reappeared somewhere else. If you look for berries in August and September, you will surely find them on the Avalon where the berries are the best of all.

2. Standing at the Top of Garrison Hill, St. John's

On a sunny summer morning with the old city spread out below you, this is the best beginning of any day. Between the old museum and the Court House, the sunshine sparkles on the water of the harbour beyond. The sounds of the downtown slowly rise up to encircle you as you plunge over the steep hill into the relaxed early morning bustle.

3. Swimming in the Avondale River

This represents a baptism in the clearest, sweetest water on the planet. It and its sister rivers on the Avalon are flash rivers with rocky bottoms running fast into dark pools and ponds on their way to the sea. Rising out of the soft water in the quiet of the woods, you can almost see a Native Newfoundland Beothuk standing on an escarpment above the pool.

4. Gros Morne

Gros Morne is a spiritual journey back to an earlier world. The great primordial hump is overpowering; it is so ancient and almost sinister in the way it draws you in. Likewise, walking in the Tablelands on the way to Trout River is another world in another time. Totally awesome, man!

5. Talking with the Gannets in their Tenement on Cape St. Mary's

Walking the barrens and downs that stretch over the Cape on top of sheer cliffs is reason alone to come to this amazing place. It is no wonder it has been a favourite spot of the gannets for millennia.

Signal Hill

3

Signal Hill, with its legendary Cabot Tower, is Newfoundland's most famous and historic landmark. It's also a marvelous place for walking, ocean-watching, and absorbing history.

The tower was built in 1897 to mark the 400th anniversary of John Cabot's discovery of Newfoundland. In 1901, Guglielmo Marconi received the first wireless message at a station near the tower.

But that's recent history. Well before then, Signal Hill was an important



COURTESY PARKS CANADA

defense site for St. John's and all of North America. The "signal" in Signal Hill comes from the flags placed at its summit that were used to signal ships and other area fortifications.

Signal Hill was the 1762 scene of the final battle of the Seven Years' War in North America (the French surrendered St. John's to the British). Signal Hill was also manned during the Napoleonic Wars, the American Civil War, and WWII. The lookouts, gunneries, and the Queen's battery barracks have all been restored. During the summer months, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment's Signal Hill tattoo, in full 1795 uniform, performs at the site. There are also tours, children's programs, and an amateur radio station that is open to visiting enthusiasts.

You can drive to Signal Hill, or hike on the North Head trail, a 1.7-kilometer (1.1 mile) route, which will take your breath away, both for its spectacular scenery and for the sensation it provides of being suspended above the ocean. Steps have been built in the steeper sections and in one place, a chain, onto which you can grasp, has been anchored to the cliffside, a sobering reminder of the waves crashing on the rocks far below

you. The trail is perfectly safe as long as you watch your step. Dogs are not recommended—my sister’s little pooch was nearly blown over the edge, pulling her with him!

North Head Trail is accessed through the Battery, a series of narrow winding roads and paths that connected the houses of local fishing families. The Battery, with its houses clinging to the rocks at the base of the hill, is a must. At one point, the North Head Trail goes right over the front steps of a house built into the cliff! Decades ago, this was not considered prime St. John’s real estate, but that changed when a few farsighted people began restoring or building houses to take advantage of the views. The Battery is now a sought-after location.

Details: *Cabot Tower is at the top of Signal Hill and can be seen from many vantage points. We’d say the CN Tower is the Cabot Tower of Toronto! From central St. John’s, travel east on Empire Avenue, Duckworth, or Water streets to Signal Hill Road. Follow Signal Hill Road until you reach Signal Hill National Historic Site. Tel (709) 772-5367. www.pc.gc.ca/eng/lhn-nhs/nl/signalhill/index.aspx*

4

Get Into the Rock

They don’t call Newfoundland “The Rock” for nothing. Newfoundland and Labrador is known by some as “the Earth’s Geological Showcase,” and the Johnson Geo Centre is the perfect place to discover why.

The Centre is dug into Signal Hill’s 550-million-year-old rock and features more than 150 linear meters (500 feet) of exposed rock walls. The Geo Centre sits in a natural rock basin that was originally filled with peat, boulders, and a mixture of clay, sand, and gravel. For unique green temperature control, six geothermal wells—each more than 150 meters (500 feet) deep—extract heat from the deep rocks in winter and dissipate it in summer.

The Centre seems to rise up out of rock outcrops, wild grasses, shrubs, and trees, and the entry plaza displays 19 large specimens of Newfoundland and Labrador’s most significant rocks and minerals. Only the Centre’s glass-encased entry is above ground (the remaining 85 per cent of the building is subterranean).

My visit to the Geo Centre was on the occasion of a charity event in the three-story-high reception hall where our solar system’s planets are magically suspended. The representation of Saturn (complete with rings) measures more than 7 meters (24 feet) in diameter.

The museum’s exhibits are divided into four sections: Our Planet, Our Province, Our People, and Our Future. The museum’s 550-million-year-old walls are themselves part of the exhibit. On days of heavy rain or snow-melt, fractures and cracks provide natural channels for water migration and the walls become wet as water seeps through.

Details: *The Geo Centre is located at 175 Signal Hill Road. Tel (709) 737-7880 or (866) 868-7625. www.geocentre.ca.*

Regatta at Quidi Vidi

5

The Royal St. John's Regatta is the oldest continuing sporting event in North America. The event probably began as a competition between locals and crews from visiting European fishing ships. The earliest confirmable mention of a rowing competition is 1816, and there is a record from 1826 of an official committee called "the Amateurs of Boat Racing."

What this tradition means to "townies" is that the Regatta is an institution and a happening not to be missed, even if you're not typically interested in boats or racing. The date of the race is even a municipal holiday in St. John's. For the uninitiated, the "boats" are fixed seat-racing shells, and the hard-trained coxswained crews of six begin competing early in the morning (winners are announced by late afternoon).

The Regatta draws tens of thousands of merrymakers annually to the shores of Quidi Vidi Lake. To many, the concession stands, brass bands, wheels of fortune, games of chance, food and drink, and, of course, the socializing, are just as big a part of the day as the races. At one end of the fairgrounds, a beer tent beckons the thirsty; at the other end, passers-by rub the toes of a life-size bronze rower for good luck. It takes place the first Wednesday in August at Quidi Vidi Lake in eastern St. John's. The city holds its breath early in the morning as the committee assesses the weather and determines if the race will go forward. If conditions are deemed unfavourable—particularly wind—the Regatta takes place on the next suitable day—bad news for those who have begun partying the night before.

Details: *The regatta is held on the first Wednesday in August (or Thursday, or occasionally Friday, if the weather doesn't cooperate) and is a civic holiday. If you miss the race, Quidi Vidi Lake is still well worth a visit; it has several kilometers of walking trails and is a wonderful place for a stroll, particularly during the warmer months. www.stjohnsregatta.org.*

6

Cathedrals, Churches and Basilicas

The history of religion in Newfoundland and Labrador is a fascinating and ancient one. Evidence recently recovered by Evan Jones, Ph.D., of Bristol University indicates that Newfoundland may be the site of the remains of North America's only medieval church, circa 1499. Three centuries later, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Congregationalist, and Methodist churches



had all been established in the sparsely populated colony, with other denominations to follow, and the building of “competing” churches in the smallest of communities had begun.

St. John’s four most majestic churches are clustered within a short walk of each other, and other fine examples aren’t far away. A visit to any of them is a serene respite from the bustle of city life. The oldest of St. John’s churches is **St. Thomas Anglican Church** (8 Military Road), which dates to 1836. Built from local spruce and pine, with Gothic windows and other Gothic motifs, St. Thomas is an excellent wooden example of early Gothic revival architecture in British North America. One of its distinguishing features, which sets it apart from other early Gothic churches in British North America, is its spire. Comparable structures had a square tower façade (the steeple did not become common until the 1840s).

There are two churches dedicated to St. John the Baptist; locals call one “the Cathedral,” and the other “the Basilica.” **The Anglican Cathedral of St. John the Baptist** (9 Cathedral Street) represents the oldest Anglican establishment in Canada. It was founded in 1699 as a parish church, and the cathedral was designed in the 1840s by Sir George Gilbert Scott, a notable Victorian architect of churches and cathedrals (his work also included the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park). Unfortunately, only the stone walls of the cruciform-shaped cathedral remained following the St. John’s Fire of 1892. Rebuilding began the following year and was completed in 1905. The Anglican Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, which was declared a National Historic Site in 1981, contains fine stained-glass and medieval carvings, as well as a small archival museum containing some early British cathedral artifacts. The area behind the church comprises the original cemetery from the 1699 parish church and is one of Canada’s oldest graveyards.

The history of the **Basilica of St. John the Baptist's** construction is remarkable: Poor Catholic parishioners provided free labour, a campaign that began in 1839 and ended with the building's 1855 consecration. When completed, the Lombard Romanesque-style, cross-shaped edifice was the largest church building in all of North America; it is now a Canadian National Historic Site. The Basilica, located at 200 Military Road, has a massive Casavant organ and is home to great works of art, including "The Dead Christ," sculpted in 1854 in Carrara marble by renowned Irish sculptor John Hogan. The cathedral museum and library are a treasure trove of religious, historic, artistic, and architectural artifacts. A highlight is the pre-Christmas display of some 130 nativity scenes of all sizes from all around the world.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, known locally as The Kirk, is an excellent example of the High Victorian Gothic Revival style. The history of Presbyterianism in Newfoundland began in 1842 when St. Andrew's was established as a congregation of the Church of Scotland. The exterior has deteriorated over the years and is being restored, but inside the Kirk is a spectacular collection of stained-glass windows and a mammoth pipe organ. The Kirk is a testimonial to the contributions of Scots to the development of St. John's.

Other notable St. John's churches include George Street United Church, Gower Street United Church, St. Patrick's Catholic Church, and Cochrane Street United Church.

Details: *St. Thomas's Anglican Church, 8 Military Road, www.st-thomaschurch.com; Anglican Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, 9 Cathedral Street, stjohnsanglicancathedral.org; The Basilica of St. John the Baptist, 200 Military Road, www.thebasilica.ca; St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church ("The Kirk") Queens Road, www.heritage.nf.ca/society/rhs/rs_listing/131.html.*

A Haunted Hike

7

How can a city that started carving itself into the hills around its harbour at the end of the 15th century not be spooky?

St. John's lays claim to being the oldest European city in North America and its historic section is full of massive stone architecture and narrow wooden row houses, which sometimes lean a little crazily against each other. Footpaths, lanes, and alleys containing the secrets of five centuries yield up their ethereal nature at night, often shrouded in the misty North Atlantic fogs that have masked the evil and the unknown for centuries.

The St. John's Haunted Hike, ably escorted by one character or another who appears to have stepped right out of time, is a walking ghost tour of St. John's. It doesn't begin until dark, and even people who have lived all

their lives in the city are astounded and chilled by “the memories of public hangings, duels, and horrific murders passing over forgotten cemeteries and unmarked graves.” Haunted buildings, paranormal events, and present-day murders seem commonplace once you probe the dark corners of old St. John’s. Not recommended for children under 8.

Details: *The Hike runs Sunday to Thursday, May through October. It begins at 9:30 p.m. at the Anglican Cathedral of St. John the Baptist (9 Cathedral Street) and lasts about 90 minutes. Cost is \$10; individual reservations are not necessary. www.hauntedhike.com.*

8

George Street

Mention St. John’s anywhere in the world and someone will say “George Street.” Located smack in the middle of downtown, George Street is party-hearty central—and Newfoundlanders know how to have a good time.

Just a few blocks long, George Street is reputed to have more bars and pubs per square foot than any street in North America. Whether truth or legend, the street is known for its great hospitality and there is so much terrific live music that you won’t know where to pitch down. No matter, you can just enjoy one spot and walk a step or two to the next. Irish and traditional music is center stage in a number of pubs, including **Bridie Molloy’s**



DEPT. OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM & CULTURE CITY OF ST. JOHN'S

(5 George Street) and **O'Reilly's** (13 George Street). **The Martini Bar**, a self-described "urban classy multi-level bar," has live bands and house DJs. Blues fans can turn to **The Fat Cat Blues Bar**. George Street is St. John's entertainment hub, but there are great places all around the area.

On a nice day or night, I like to sit at an outdoor patio, or even on the public steps, and people watch. The street is closed to traffic after noon and is at its liveliest around midnight. In early August, during the six-day George Street Festival, one admission fee gives you access to everything. The bandstand features near-continuous music and you can stroll around with the beverage of your choice in hand. Other big events on George Street include Halloween and, of course, Paddy's Day. The latter has morphed into Paddy's Long Weekend and even Paddy's Week, and dozens of terrific bands entertain punters on the street and environs from morning to, well, morning.

Details: *George Street is located between the two main downtown drags of Duckworth/New Gower and Water Street. Best leave your car at home and not just for the obvious reasons. Parking downtown is a challenge, even for locals who know the lesser-known spots, like under City Hall after-office hours. Unless it's Friday happy hour, most bands don't start until 11 or later because closing time is still hours away. At some places, the bar may close, but the party goes on for hours.*

Railway Coastal Museum

9

Despite its being guaranteed in the 1949 Terms of Confederation with Canada, Newfoundland lost its passenger-rail service in 1969 and its freight service in 1988. Many still mourn the loss of the "Newfie Bullet," a name believed to have originated as a derogatory usage by American



COURTESY OF RAILWAY COASTAL MUSEUM

servicemen but which subsequently came to be used affectionately.

The railway went through the interior of the island and in highly exposed areas such as the Gaff Topsails, crews often spent days battling snowdrifts much taller than the train itself. Spur lines connected to a few coastal communities, from which the coastal boat service took on the job of delivering goods, mail, and people to and from thousands of isolated outports. The museum commemorates the service—on the rails and on the water—of these vital early transportation links that knitted together far-flung communities.

The museum is located in the Newfoundland Railway Station, which was built in the grand style of the early 1900s. The contemporary experience is fun and very user-friendly—just follow the footsteps painted on the floor and you can't go wrong. A 1940s passenger-train diorama, complete with costumed figures, transports visitors to the days when train travel was at its luxurious heyday in Newfoundland. The recently opened train park has an engine, a mail car, a coach car, and even a "speeder."

The station is a true jumping-off point: It represents mile (or kilometer) "0" of the Trans Canada Trail, which aims to connect Canadians from the Atlantic to the Pacific via the world's longest recreational trail.

Details: *The Railway Coastal Museum is open year-round and located at 495 Water Street West. Tel (709) 724-5929. www.railwaycoastalmuseum.ca.*

10

Newman Wine Vaults

The Newman Wines Vaults, once used to age port wine, were built in the late 18th century and were in operation until the early 1900s. The vaults were made of stone and fired red brick, tapered in curves and arches, and mortared with lime mortar made from seashells. Unfortunately, a cement block-and-stone building was erected on top of the vaults to protect them, so from the outside, there is no indication of the architectural beauty of the two great wine cellars inside.

To back up a bit, the Vaults represent a unique deviation from St. John's traditional fishing relationship with Portugal. The story goes that in 1679 a vessel from Oporto, Portugal was bound for London with a cargo of ruby port wine when it was attacked by privateers. While trying to escape, it ended up well out into the North Atlantic. After weathering several storms that blew it closer to North America, the captain decided to head for St. John's until spring. The casks of port were stored underground in the Southside Hills of St. John's. When the cargo finally made it to London, it was found to have an improved bouquet, mellowness and flavor, and so Newman and Company decided to age its port wine in Newfoundland.

The vaults are a Registered Heritage Structure and are now used to



COURTESY NEWFOUNDLAND HISTORIC TRUST

chronicle the colourful history of the liquor trade in Newfoundland. The wine vaults also host cultural events—including—of course, wine tastings.

Details: *The Newman Wine Vaults are operated by the Newfoundland Historic Trust and are typically open mid-June to late August, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., seven days a week. The vaults are located at 436 Water Street. Tel (709) 739-7870. www.heritage.nf.ca/society/rhs/rs_listing/123.html.*

MUN Botanical Gardens

11

There is nothing more serene on a sunny day than to take a book or a writing pad or just yourself and sit on a bench or warm rock in one of the flower gardens in Memorial University of Newfoundland's Botanical Garden complex.

The Garden, which includes nature trails through boreal forest, barrens and wetlands, is also a center for botanical research, particularly on Newfoundland flora. Among the many gardens are a cottage garden, a rock garden, an alpine house, a Newfoundland heritage



TODD BOLAND

garden, a medicinal garden, a vegetable garden, and a dried flower garden. It's wonderfully big, beautiful, and educational, with an ever-changing palette for visitors from May to November. I think August is my favorite, but then there's June ... No matter, after a leisurely 20-minute stroll, followed by something scrumptious from the tea shop, you'll know there's much more to "The Rock" than rocks. And after a day of tasting at the Potato Festival in September, you'll never think of the spud as common again.

Details: The MUN Botanical Garden is located at 306 Mount Scio Road in Pippy Park, just up Allendale Road behind the Confederation Building. Tel (709) 737-8590. www.mun.ca/botgarden.

12

Bowring Park's WWI Caribou and Memorial Plaques

Bowring Park is a gem set on 200 acres of the beautiful Waterford Valley in western St. John's. It has natural meadows, flower gardens, an extensive collection of native and introduced trees and shrubs, a beautiful duck pond, streams, waterfalls, and bridges.

You can feed the swans and ducks, enjoy the fountain and Peter Pan statue, then stroll the paths and find a spot by a stream to enjoy a picnic. Don't leave without paying your respects to Newfoundlanders killed during WWI. There is a statue of the Fighting Newfoundlander, plus one of a Caribou (a copy of the original found in France at the Beaumont Hamel Newfoundland Memorial). The Bowring Caribou Memorial contains three bronze plaques, replicas of the ones at Beaumont Hamel. The plaques bear the names of the 820 members of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, the Royal Naval Reserve, and the Mercantile Marine who died



CITY OF ST. JOHN'S ARCHIVES

in WWI and who have no known graves. This peaceful, beautiful spot testifies to great sorrow and loss, but you will be glad you came.

Details: *Bowring Park is free and is located in the west end of St. John's; the main entrance is off Waterford Bridge Road. www.bowringpark.com.*

Spirit of Newfoundland

13



COURTESY SPIRIT OF NEWFOUNDLAND

Spirit of Newfoundland is a troupe of professionally trained vocalists and actors with a broad repertoire. They have been entertaining audiences in St. John's and elsewhere since 1997 with a rare brand of dinner theatre that mixes comedy, dance, and song inspired by Newfoundland culture and history. They are often chosen to entertain visiting dignitaries and have even performed before Queen Elizabeth.

The Spirit of Newfoundland serves up original fare, including "Miracle on George Street," "Grinch," "Dressing & Gravy," "Paddy McGuinty's Wake," as well as terrific tribute pieces to departed stars like Buddy Holly, Patsy Cline, and our own Joan (Morrisey), Dick (Nolan), and Harry (Hibbs). Perennial Spirit of Newfoundland favourites include "Forever Plaid" and "Nonsense."

There are many good theatre troupes in Newfoundland and Labrador, but if I had to pick one, it would be the Spirit of Newfoundland. Not only are they extremely talented and serve excellent food in the historic Masonic Temple, but their signature song "Spirit of Newfoundland," sung at the end of every evening, never fails to bring a lump to my throat. Go. You'll see what I mean.

Details: *Spirit of Newfoundland perform in the Masonic Temple, a designated Heritage Building located at 6 Cathedral Street in downtown St. John's. Three-course dinner and show costs \$66.11 taxes in, plus optional gratuity. Reservations are advised. Tel (709) 579-3023 or (877) 661-3023. www.spiritofnewfoundland.com.*

TAKE 5

RON HYNES

FIVE FAVOURITE VENUES FOR PERFORMING

Singer, songwriter, actor and performer Ron Hynes was born in St. John's in 1950 and raised in Ferryland. He has been recording since the early 1970s and has seven solo albums and numerous collaborative recordings to his credit. Ron is a six-time East Coast Music Award winner, a Genie Award winner, and a past JUNO, Canadian Country Music Award and Canadian Folk Music Award nominee. He is the recipient of the SOCAN National Achievement Award (for songwriting career success), and holds an honorary doctorate from Memorial University for his songwriting and contributions to the cultural life of his beloved Newfoundland and Labrador.

Ron Hynes is best known for his folk classic "Sonny's Dream," haunting chronicle "Atlantic Blue," heart-wrenching requiem "Godspeed," and a string of other radio hits. Ron's songs have been recorded by dozens of artists worldwide, including Emmylou Harris, Christy Moore, Mary Black, Denny Doherty, Murray McLauchlan, Valdy, John McDermott, and Hayley Westenra. Ron Hynes tours regularly throughout Canada and abroad. Visit him online at www.hynesite.org.

1. **The LSPU Hall**

The LSPU (Longshoremen's Protective Union) Hall in St. John's holds a special place in my heart. I feel that my years doing concerts and working with the Mummers Troupe and CODCO helped shape my songwriting style and taught me how to "step outside myself." In other words, to write about something or someone else other than myself and my relation to the world around me. I sometimes feel that everything I know about songwriting had its beginnings at the LSPU Hall.

2. **The Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival at Bannerman Park**

The Bannerman Park folk festival in St. John's is particularly special for me as I actually played the very first year. A small afternoon show with only John White, Jim Payne, and myself (the event only lasted a mere hour or more, but it was the beginning of an tradition that has endured for a number of years now. . . I forget how many). My fondest memory of that beginning was singing "For Now I'm Sixty-Four" with John White. I look forward to this event every year and am always disappointed when I'm not invited to play. The Wonderful Grand Band played in August 2010, a first for the festival.

3. **The Shamrock Festival in Ferryland (my home town)**

The Shamrock Festival in Ferryland has endured almost as long as the Bannerman Fest and features mostly performers from the Southern Shore (or the Irish Loop as it's affectionately called). Very few "name artists" perform, with the exception of myself (if I may be so bold as to boast a "name"), Maureen Ennis from the Ennis Sisters of Cape Broyle, and Blair Harvey, a great songwriter who also hails from Ferryland. Also, John Curran of the Masterless Men performs regularly and is a very talented songwriter from that community. Who knew a small town like that could produce more than one good songwriter?

4. **Writers at Woody Point**

Writers at Woody Point began in 2004 and I've performed there since 2007. The festival was the brainchild of *Toronto Globe and Mail* sports columnist Stephen Brunt, and features novelists and poets from Newfoundland and elsewhere, as well as songwriters and musicians from the island and across Canada. My current CD project, *Stealing Genius*, consists of collaborative work with many of the festival's performers, including Des Walsh, Randall Maggs, and Michael Crummey. It's become a habit of mine to "stay on" in Woody Point after the festival finishes to do some writing. The community settles back to its normal post-festival life and I'm always made to feel welcome. It's like a home away from home.

5. **The March Hare**

Finally, the March Hare. I didn't have the pleasure of performing at this festival until its 18th year. A forerunner of Writers at Woody Point, it was started by the late and much-lamented writer/poet Al Pittman. Over the years it's grown from Corner Brook to include shows in Gander, St. John's and elsewhere in Newfoundland, as well as Toronto, and even a great tour of Ireland in 2007. Poets, writers, singers, songwriters . . . it's a feast of literary thrills. I'm forever introduced as "the poet who sings." A truly charming accolade. This event is not to be missed.

14

Fish and Chips, Dressing and Gravy



COURTESY OF CHES'S FISH & CHIPS

You can get great fish and chips all over Newfoundland, but St. John's remains the fish-and-chip capital, perhaps of all North America.

Wherever you are, go to a place that brags about its version. If it's just another item on a big menu, it might not be a specialty. Ches's in St. John's is an institution, but there are plenty of exceptional, lesser-known establishments. Downtown you can't do better than the Duke of Duckworth or

Kelly's Pub. Friday night at Kelly's you can also have a "scuff with your scoff" (or, as mainlanders would put it, a dance with your food) from 6 o'clock on. My vote for Newfoundland's top fish and chips might go to Little Dernier in Eastport, but that's a little out of the way if you are based in St. John's. To be exact, it's on the Eastport Peninsula, a 280 kilometer (175 mi) drive. No matter: As long as the cod is fresh and the chips homemade (fresh-cut, not frozen), you can't go wrong in St. John's or elsewhere. For true Newfoundland style, order dressing and gravy on the side.

Details: *Two pieces of fish on a plate piled high can be had for about \$10. Ches's: 9 Freshwater Road in St. John's, as well as locations in Mount Pearl and Gander. Tel (709) 726-3434; www.chessfishandchips.ca. The Duke of Duckworth: 325 Duckworth Street (it's really in McMurdo's Lane, an alley of concrete steps between Duckworth and Water Street). Tel (709) 739-6344; www.dukeofduckworth.com. Kelly's Pub: 25 George Street. Tel (709) 753-5300. Little Dernier: Main Street, Eastport. Tel (709) 677-3663.*