

**Publication:** THE RECORD  
**Date:** 03/25/2007  
**Edition:** All Editions  
**Byline:** By RICHARD WHITBY, STAFF WRITER

**Day:** Sunday  
**Page:** T01  
**Section:** TRAVEL  
**Source:** North Jersey Media Group

---

## BROODING NOVA SCOTIA

### **Its misty eastern shore holds a wealth of history and natural attractions**

There aren't any luxury hotels. Just a few widely spaced motels and B&Bs.

The restaurants usually are rustic, even if the food is wonderful.

And golf courses are few.

This is the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia — the least-visited coast of the province, but perhaps the most intriguing.

Here, among empty homesteads and abandoned islands, the difficulty of life in the Maritimes — perched between sea and stone — lies exposed.

Here, too, the shipwrecks that punctuate the coast bear witness to the fickle Atlantic — ready to take in an instant what it grudgingly gives to the inhabitants of its margins.

This is Maritimes travel without a lot of tourism.

The Eastern Shore begins in Halifax and ends in Canso, 135 miles to the east. But the only major highway, Route 107, ends 22 miles east of Dartmouth — a Halifax suburb. After that, the Marine Drive, as it's known, is two-lane blacktop, and 135 miles become more like 230 miles as Route 7, then Routes 211 and 316, loop inland around dozens of bay heads.

In Musquodoboit Harbour, you can turn south along East Petpeswick Road and head 7½ miles to Martinique Beach, the longest in Nova Scotia. The waterways behind the beach are excellent for kayaking.

In Head of Jeddore, a settlement, not surprisingly, near the head of Jeddore Harbour, is the Lobster Shack, which serves an astonishing seafood stew, along with lobster, in a dining room overlooking the water. It is a must-stop on any Eastern Shore trip. Indeed, the combination of the Martinique Beach and Head of Jeddore make for a fine day trip out of Halifax.

A bit farther up the coast, in West Jeddore, Barry Colpitts' home is hard to miss. He's adorned it with folk art and wry observations and sells equally satiric wood sculpture in a small outbuilding. If he takes a liking to you, he'll show you his studio — a tiny workshop in a barn up a trail through a pasture. Barry is a Haligonian, as people from Halifax are called, who decided years ago to move closer to the land. His work has been displayed in galleries and museums throughout the continent and is reasonably priced.

Not far to the east is Tangier, where Coastal Adventures, a long-established kayaking outfitter, is based. One of its tour directors, Scott Cunningham, literally wrote the book about paddling in the region, "Sea Kayaking in Nova Scotia." Coastal Adventures offers a variety of tours and classes for everyone from beginners to experts. It rents kayaks, too.

Also in Tangier is J. Willy Krauch & Sons Ltd., whose smoked fish is sold throughout North America. Willy came to Canada from Denmark and brought the Danish smoking process with him. Besides salmon, the company smokes mackerel, eel, herring and trout. If you like smoked fish, this is definitely worth the stop. Try the lemon-smoked salmon chunks.

### Kayaking heaven

All along the drive are glimpses of intimate bays and — when the road rises to cross headlands — of the Atlantic, with strings of islands to the horizon. Many of the smaller towns and settlements are on side roads or loops off the main road.

Some of these towns have suffered in recent years from the collapse of the fishing industry in the region, but the lobstermen are thriving.

This is kayaking heaven, with a near-endless choice of waters in which to paddle — from sheltered coves to open ocean — and incredible scenery. The coast has scores of islands, many of which contain ruins of long-abandoned farmsteads or fishing camps. The smaller islets are often haul-outs for seals or rookeries for the abundant cormorants, terns and gulls.

A word of caution: Once you get out of shallow, sheltered bays, the water is bone-chilling cold, even in midsummer. So wear a wetsuit if you plan to paddle among the outer islands. Also pay attention to the weather. Few places are more exposed to the fury of the North Atlantic than the Eastern Shore, as the many wreck sites attest.

It also can be very foggy — part of the brooding mystique of the Maritimes. But for paddlers, whiteout off a rocky coastline is very scary, even with a GPS receiver to help navigation.

One thing kayakers don't have to worry much about is boat traffic. The only commercial boats operating are the lobster boats. Few pleasure craft ply these waters. This is definitely not Barnegat Bay on Memorial Day weekend.

Launch sites are sometimes difficult to find, but most of the locals are fairly nonchalant about parking. Any spot that doesn't block someone else usually is OK.

Odd sight

Sheet Harbour is about halfway between Halifax and Canso and is the biggest community along the Marine Drive, with several motels and B&Bs, two supermarkets, a hospital and numerous other services. It's a good place to stock up for the drive to Canso. The café at the Fairwinds Motel serves splendid fish and chips.

Sheet Harbour also has one of the oddest sights on the Eastern Shore, Mom's, a bar that occupies the interior of an old oil-storage tank. Be forewarned, however: It looks a lot more interesting from the outside. Inside, it's dark, dank and just a bit of a dive.

The Marquis of **Dufferin** in Port **Dufferin** is one of the nicer hotels along the Marine Drive, with a terrific vista across a bay to the ocean and a pier for watching the spectacular sunsets. Hosts David and Patricia Criss are attentive to their guests, and their evenings in the hotel bar are not to be missed.

Another 12 miles or so brings one to Sherbrooke Village, Nova Scotia's largest museum and the only real tourist destination along the Marine Drive. Much like Colonial Williamsburg, Sherbrooke, which has its roots in shipbuilding, fishing and gold mining, attempts to depict a historical community, in this case between 1860 and World War I.

It has 80 buildings, 25 of which are open to the public. Among them are wood-turning and blacksmith shops and a fin de siècle tea room. It hosts numerous events, from Celtic music gatherings to chowder festivals.

Cable ferry

Sherbrooke is a turning point in the Marine Drive. Visitors can head north, away from the coast and toward Antigonish. The remaining one-third of the coastal trip is through less-settled country, with fewer and smaller towns.

It also includes a ferry ride across Country Harbor, at a cost of \$5 (Canadian) on a boat that hauls itself across the fjord-like harbor along a cable.

East of Country Harbour the coastal road is Route 316, which follows some of the least inhabited shoreline in Nova Scotia — stark and stunningly beautiful — through such communities as Charlos Cove, Felix Harbour and Tor Bay. These waters are terrific for secluded paddling.

About 40 miles out, Route 316 reaches Route 16, where a right turn brings you to Canso, a fishing town with a 400-year history. It is here, at the easternmost tip of mainland Nova Scotia, that Western Union and Commercial Cable Co. anchored the North American ends of their trans-Atlantic cables.

The town has an excellent museum, several B&Bs and motels and a campground.

Here, too, is Canso Islands National Historic Site. A short boat ride takes you to Grassy Island, where colonial-era fishermen established a thriving community. The French were the first to exploit the rich fishing grounds in the area, and this is one of the places France and Britain played out a small episode of their battle for dominion in the Northern Hemisphere during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Perhaps it's only fitting, then, that this trip end where much of Nova Scotia's history began.

\*\*\*

E-mail: <mailto:whitby@northjersey.com>

Website: <http://www.northjersey.com/>