Canadian island and its life

By Karl J. Bodnaruk
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GRAND MANAN ISLAND, New Brunswick — The eerie fol-
lowing of a nearby foghorn punctu-
tuated the night air, cutting
through the mist and echoing off
an island less than a mile away. We
slipped on oversize rubber boots that
reached our knees, rolled up our
sleeves, and began digging our
hands into the thick purple sea-
weed, pulling it free from the slip-
perry rocks and dumping it into an
orange laundry basket.

If you go . . .

How to get there
Grand Manan is about 360 miles
from Boston, about a 6½-hour drive.
From Boston, take Interstate 93 north
to Interstate 95 north for about 250
miles. Pick up Route 35 east, follow-
ing signs for Route 9, and Lake Route 9
for about 50 miles to the Canadian
border at Calais, Maine. From Calais,
take Route 1 north to Route 776 to
Black Harbour.

Coastal Transport
902-662-3724
www.coastaltransport.com

Ran numerous 90-minute car ferries
between Blacks Harbour on the
mainland and Grand Manan each day.
$8 per person, $24 per vehicle.

Where to stay
Shorecrest Lodge
100 Route 176
506-662-3126
www.shorecreslodge.com

Run by two super-friendly, former Cape
Cod residents, Guenter Bogenauer
and Evelyn Plane. Ten rooms, $100-
$125.

Swallowtail Inn

When the basket was full, we
dumped its slippery contents into
the back of Reid Ross's pickup
truck, which was angled so that its
headlights lit up the field of sea-
weed around us.

We were on an island we had
reached over a sundial at low tide,
off the east coast of Grand Manan
Island in New Brunswick, and one
thing was certain: This was no or-
dinary Friday night for my friend
Sarah and me, Bostonians both.

"We come out here every day,"
said Ross, 30, a lifelong resident
of Grand Manan, who has been har-
vesting seaweed since he was 16.

"Or twice a day when the tides
are right," said his friend Judy
Woodridge, who was showing us
how to identify and extract the
dulse, a local seaweed that is dark-
er, thicker, and more flavorful than
other varieties and, thus, bet-
ter quality. "This is one of the best
places to find dulse."

Grand Manan considers itself
the "dulse capital of the world" and
residents earn their living by
hand-picking the edible seaweed
at low tide, drying it on fields of
beach rocks, then selling it to a lo-
cal cooperative, which ships it
around the world.

According to Woodridge, this
"sea vegetable" can be eaten right
out of the bag as a crunchy snack,
grounded into flaxes and used as sea-
soning in soups, salads, or pasta,
or dry-roasted in a skillet and eat-
en. I am a fan of seaweed spa treat-
ments and enjoy a hint of the juice
in certain meals, but what piqued
my interest in this local industry
was the act of harvesting seaweed.

Last summer, Sarah and I took
a road trip from Boston to New

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tender terminus and a majority of the
island's roads and settlements.
Here, the land is scalloped with
coves, harbors, and pebbly beach-
es protected by nearly two dozen
islands sprinkled off the coast.

Many of the 2,800 residents on
the island know each other either
by face or name, or at least know
one another's business.

"If you haven't heard a rumor
by 10 o'clock, start one," quipped
a local man.

"It's a very simple life," said
Guenter Bogenauer, who had
moved from Cape Cod five months
earlier to run the Shorecrest
Lodge, where we were staying
"People don't need or want a lot."

True to island style, Bogen-
auer set aside his daily errands
to show us some of the highlights:
Swallowtail Lighthouse on the
cliffs of North Head, a dear farm,
a lobster pound, herring and
round fishing traps that poke out
of the water and are visible in
The Quartz
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The island, once the summer home of novelist Willa Cather, is no home to artists' galleries, several small museums, and shops that sell local crafts and trinkets. The Grand Manan tourist office doesn't offer the usual “sea-weed tossing” for tourists, but the golfers we met seemed to welcome anyone who was interested in playing or watching and asking questions.

We met Ross and Woolridge at the putting greens, a large field in the middle of the island. Hansted's beach courts and rock walls with netting to keep the dulse from sticking. They showed us the art of spreading out the dulse to dry. Some people shake their hands up and down to loosen the seaweed and let it fall freely, others toss clumps off to the ground so if nesting areas. Each dulse develops a personal style.

Sarah and I had little free time to travel — our work was pressing.

Heckles of Brighton, left, and Judy Woolridge, who lives on is a hiker's dream — and a workout is watching your step.

As a parting gift, Woolridge gave us armloads of dried dulse and Bogensperger used his vacuum-packing machine to homogenically seal it for us — a good 40 bags of seaweed.

Contact Kurt Bedrichshule, a freelance writer who lives in Somerset, at durschu@ymail.com.

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