



Dark Harbour, on Grand Manan Island, is popular for seaweed harvesting (and weir fishing). Sarah and I, on the island, harvest dulse, a seaweed that is made into seasoning and exported worldwide. The coast

Canadian island and its lives

By Kari J. Bodnarchuk

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

GRAND MANAN ISLAND,

New Brunswick — The eerie bel-
lowing of a nearby foghorn punc-
tuated the night air, cutting
through the mist and echoing off
an island less than a mile away. We
slipped on oversized 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-
pery rocks and dumping it into an
orange laundry basket.

When the basket was full, we
dumped its slithery 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 sandbar 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, 39, 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
Woolridge, 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
local cooperative, which ships it
around the world.

According to Woolridge, this
"sea vegetable" can be eaten right
out of the bag as a crunchy snack,
ground into flakes 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 spice
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



foundland terrain and a majority of the
island's roads and settlements. Here,
the land is scalloped with coves,
harbors, and pebbly beaches
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
Guenther Bogensperger, 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-
sperger set aside his daily errands
to show us some of the highlights:
Swallowtail Lighthouse on the
cliffs of North Head, a deer farm, a
lobster pound, herring weirs
(round fishing traps that poke out
of the water and are visible in

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 230
miles. Pick up Route 395 east, follow-
ing signs for Route 9, and take Route 9
for about 90 miles to the Canadian
border at Calais, Maine. From Calais,
take Route 1 north to Route 776 to
Blacks Harbour.

Coastal Transport

506-662-3724

www.coastaltransport.ca

Runs 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 776

506-662-3216

www.shorecrestlodge.com

Run by two super-friendly, former Cape
Cod residents, Guenther Bogensperger
and Evelyn Paine. Ten rooms, \$60-
\$95.

Swallowtail Inn

50 Lighthouse Road
North Head
506-662-1100
www.swallowtailinn.com

On the tip of North Head Peninsula: Six rooms with fabulous ocean views, though sleeping can be a challenge if the fog rolls in: Swallowtail Lighthouse (and its very effective foghorn) sits just several hundred feet away. Rooms: \$55-\$100.

Where to eat

Inn at Whale Cove Lodge and Cottages

26 Whale Cove Cottage Road
506-662-3181
www.holidayjunction.com

A small and cozy inn near the north end of the island. Seared scallops, lamb curry, and chicken and fiddlehead crepes are highlights. Daily 6-8 p.m.. Entrees \$11-\$20. Reservations required.

McLaughlin's Wharf Inn

1863 Route 776
Seal Cove
506-662-8760

On the water and open for dinner daily 5:30-8 p.m. in summer. Extensive selection of seafood dishes, plus a few steak, chicken, and pasta meals. Try the curried squash soup. Fantastic bread made daily. Entrees \$9.50-\$17.50. Reservations required.

What to do

Adventure High

83 Route 776
North Head
800-732-5492

www.adventurehigh.com

Three- to six-hour sea kayaking trips, plus two-hour sunset tours and moonlight paddles. Two-hour trip \$31 per person, day trip \$79 per person. Cycling, too.

Whales-n-Sails Adventures

888-994-4044

www.whales-n-sails.com

Whale-watching trips twice a day (11:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.) from North Head aboard a 56-foot sailboat. Adults \$52, children \$32.

Grand Manan Museum

1143 Route 776
506-662-3424

www.grandmananmuseum.ca

Houses the Grand Manan Visitors Information Centre, and offers information on local birds, history, and wildlife. Monday-Friday in September, 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Free; donations accepted.

More information

Grand Manan Tourism Association

888-525-1655

www.grandmananb.com

Brunswick and spent a week exploring the province's east coast: biking coastal trails, kayaking around barrier islands in a national park, visiting the Acadian Peninsula for an annual French Acadian festival, and stopping on Grand Manan to try our hands at dulcing.

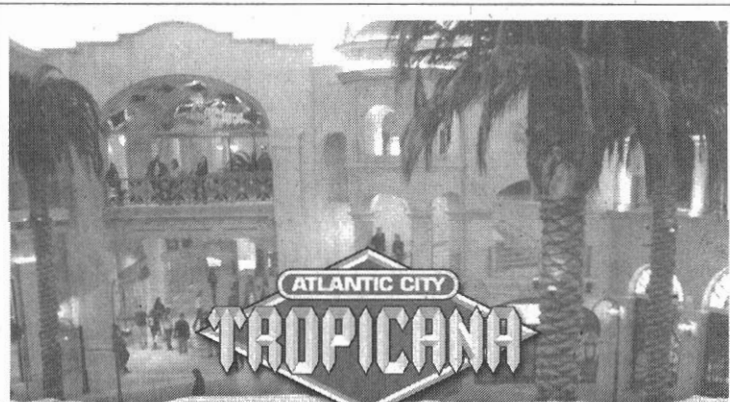
Although Grand Manan belongs to New Brunswick, it's just 8 miles off the coast of Maine (and about 21 miles from the Canada mainland) and is accessible from Eastport, Maine, by way of Deer Island, Campobello Island, (home of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt's rustic 34-room summer cottage), and Letete in southern New Brunswick. Alternatively, it's just a 6-hour drive from Boston to Blacks Harbour on the province's south coast, where you can catch a 90-minute ferry ride to the island. That's what we did.

Grand Manan is 15 miles long by 6 miles wide. The rugged west coast is dominated by cliffs that rise to 400 feet, rocky beaches with driftwood the size of telephone poles, and a few small settlements. The east coast has gen-

coves and inlets around the island), the Sardine Museum in Seal Cove (Grand Manan is also the self-proclaimed "herring capital of the world"), and, of course, the local dulcing grounds.

Tourists usually come here for reasons other than harvesting seaweed. Forty-three miles of marked hiking trails wind along the cliffs, cut through the island's forested interior, and meander along the flatter east coast. The sea kayaking, too, is unbeatable, if challenging: The area has 27-to-30-foot tides (some of the highest in the world), water temperatures around 47 degrees, and fog that can roll in fast, so choosing a reputable guide or outfitter is essential.

Grand Manan is a top bird- and whale-watching spot. More than 1,000 birds — as many as 230 species — nest on the island, and you have a good chance of seeing puffins, razorbills, cormorants, eagles, ospreys, and peregrine falcons. Whale-watching by sailboat is popular, and minke, finbacks, humpbacks, and Northern right whales are common.



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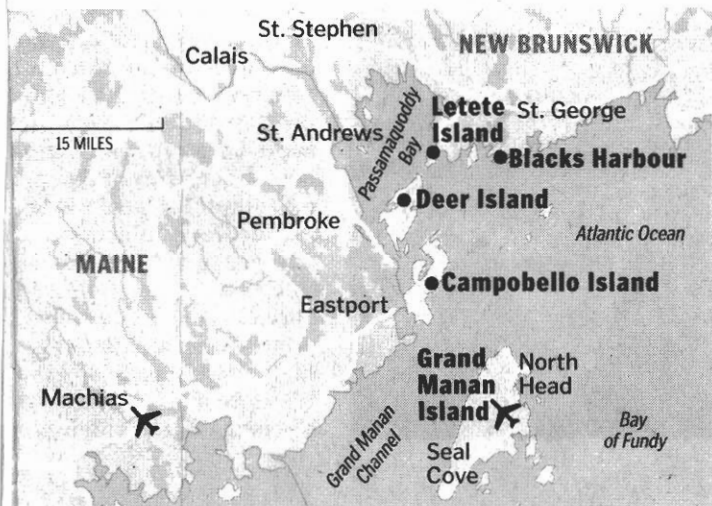
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GLOBE PHOTOS/KARI J. BODNARCHUK

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

...rest on seaweed



SOURCE: ESRI

GLOBE STAFF GRAPHIC/AARON ATENCIO

The island, once the summer home of novelist Willa Cather, is also home to artists' galleries, several small museums, and shops that sell local crafts and trinkets.

The Grand Manan tourist office doesn't officially market "seaweed harvesting" for tourists, but the dulsters we met seemed to welcome anyone who was interested in helping or simply watching and asking questions.

We met Ross and Woolridge at the dulsing grounds, a large field in the middle of the island blanketed in beach rocks and covered 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 of it to the ground as if dealing cards. Each dulster develops a personal style.

Sarah and I had little finesse at first — our rows were clumpy —

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

Contact Kari Bodnarchuk, a freelance writer who lives in Somerville, at ekarib@yahoo.com.

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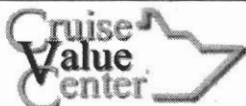
but we eventually got the hang of it. Later, once the dulse had dried, Woolridge, Ross, and Wilbur Ingersoll, another local dulse, showed us how to flip the long rows of dried seaweed. This required a long pole with a piece of rope attached to each end. We rolled the dulse around the pole, like dough around a rolling pin, then flipped it over and unrolled it. Once the other side was dry — probably the next day, after we had left — they would come back, roll up the dulse, bundle it, and drop it at the cooperative, which pays them about \$2 per pound.



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