



Travel Industry TODAY



HOME

ABOUT VIDEOS COLUMNISTS CONTACT SEARCH



DISCOVERING SPACE

Serenity and Drama on the Avalon Peninsula

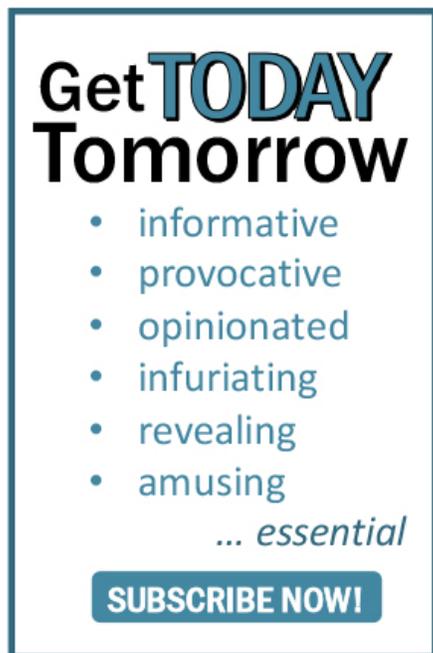
Steve Gillick

SHARE ON FACEBOOK



11 JUL 2016: Michael Gatherall sees over 2.5 million visitors a year; 10,000 of whom are travellers from around the globe. The others consist mainly of Puffins, Humpback, Minke and Fin Whales, Common and Thick-Billed Murres, Black-Legged Kitiwakes, some Cormorants and a few icebergs.

But whether mammal, bird or floating chunks of ice, each is seeking space in the beautiful surroundings of Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula.



**Get TODAY
Tomorrow**

- informative
- provocative
- opinionated
- infuriating
- revealing
- amusing

... essential

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

As the owner of Gatherall's Puffin and Whale Watch, Michael reasons that people on vacation are trying to get rid of the stress in their lives. They look down to avoid eye contact...until they arrive in Newfoundland, "where people look you in the eye". Then visitors start to relax, let loose and experience the spaces around them.

And throughout the Avalon Peninsula, experiential opportunities go hand in hand with re-discovering space to think and dream.

Our five-day, 1240 kilometer driving adventure took us from St. John's to Brigus and Cupids on Conception Bay, over to Dildo and Green's Harbour, south to Cape St. Mary's and on to Trepassey and Mistaken Point, before heading up the eastern coast to Ferryland, Bay Bulls and back to St. John's.



All along the way I thought of the themes that inspire people to travel these days: connecting with the land, breathing fresh air, multi-tasking to take in as much as possible, relating to the locals, sampling new foods, quaffing craft beers, listening to the serene sounds of winds and waves, and then adding in the Newfoundland perspective; thrilling to the cacophony of bird colonies perched on dramatic cliffs, 'being' in spaces where history happened, and discovering the sheer joy of just getting away.

Brigus is a picturesque fishing community on Conception Bay, about an hour's drive from St. John's. Hawthorne Cottage National Historic Site in the centre of the village was the home of Captain Bob Bartlett, the Arctic explorer whose exploits included three attempts at reaching the North Pole with Robert Peary. A close walk away are other 19th century homes, a memorial to Captain Bob by the rocky waterfront, and "the tunnel" that allowed the Captain easy access to his ships.

Nearby in Cupids, John Guy established North America's second English Settlement in 1610 (Jamestown, Virginia was settled in 1607). Jacob Elyk gave us an enthusiastic tour of Cupids Legacy Centre which opened in 2010 for the 400th Anniversary of the town. This impressive facility recounts the history of the community that started in Cuppers Cove (named after the 'cup'

shape of the harbor) and then over the years changed its name to Coopers Cove, Cupits Cove and finally, “Cupids”.



Down the road we enjoyed one of the more memorable meals a foodie could ask for. Lunch at Skipper Bens, a restored 1890 property, consisted of savoury seafood chowder followed by fresh steamed salmon, pan-fried cod and fish cake. The pièce de résistance was the Skipper’s Coleslaw, prepared by Chef Natalie Bartlett, and possibly the most delicious on the face of the planet!

A short drive away at Cupids Cove Plantation, Bill Gilbert, the founding and current archeologist was on hand to personally guide us around the site and share his passion and excitement at unearthing the past and making history come alive.

As much as our first day was about people, our second day was about birds and rocks. We left Green’s Harbour at 5:30 am and drove to the southwest tip of the Avalon Peninsula to Cape St. Mary’s, one of Newfoundland’s ‘must-see’ ecological reserves.

The short briefing on arrival consisted of four words, repeated six times. “Don’t leave the trail”. To avoid the lure of wandering too close to eroding cliff sides to take photos, or of losing your way in a sudden rolling dense fog, there are stakes laid out along the trail that visitors can follow. After about 20 minutes, with the noise getting louder at each

step, you come to Bird Rock, a stunning site of tens of thousands of squawking Northern Gannet's, with Kittiwakes, Murres and penguin-like Razor Bills nesting on the adjacent rocky cliffs. This is a venue where serenity abandons 'quiet' and peace of mind transforms into one of nature's more spectacular sites. It's possibly the noisiest tranquility you will ever experience.

Afterward, we drove three hours to the southeastern tip of the peninsula to visit Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve for another memorable experience. A 45-minute hike across a plain of arctic plants and trees (and two river crossings) lead to the roaring ocean where we took off our shoes, put on protective cloth booties and explored a 565 million year old sea floor containing fossils of the oldest complex life-forms found anywhere on earth.

Dinner at the nearby Edge of Avalon Inn in Trepassey allowed us to get up close and personal with succulent lobster, crab and a rhubarb pie straight out of the oven, as well as to enjoy our host, Carol Ann Deveraux's engaging hospitality.



Our last day on the road took us up the east coast to Ferryland where we toured the Colony of Avalon, settled by Lord Baltimore in 1621. In the 17th century kitchen we learned the secrets of baking bread in ashes and drinking ale from a puzzle jug. Then we explored the site of the Colony, built around tiny harbour known as The Pool, with its defensive walls, the mysterious water well, and the world's first flush toilet (the flush occurs when the tide goes out every day).

Later we picked up our gourmet lunch basket from Lighthouse Picnics, and found our own space on a nearby hill to take in the dramatic rock formations, the roaring ocean, the hovering fog, the birds and the cliffs.

Further up the coast at Bay Bulls, we boarded Gatherall's Puffin and Whale Watch boat where only yards from the dock we spotted our first humpback whale. Braving the rolling meter-high

waves, we headed to Witless Bay Ecological Reserve to feast our eyes and digital memory cards on Puffins, Murres and Kittiwakes by the thousands, on the rocks, on the water and in the air.



Our last day was spent exploring all that makes St. John's such an enjoyable walking city: Quidi Vidi Village, the music stores, coffee shops, pubs and restaurants on Water, George and Duckworth Streets, the jelly bean houses on Gower Street, the museum and art gallery at The Rooms, and a visit to Cabot Tower on Signal Hill with its nature trails that afford great views of the ocean, the harbour and the city.

Our trip to Newfoundland was escapism at its best; a celebration of reveling in space while at the same time enjoying the serenity and drama of people and nature confronting and surviving on the windy rocky shores, against the backdrop of the roaring Atlantic Ocean.

Discovering space can be a very rewarding pursuit.

**Get TODAY
Tomorrow**

- informative
- provocative
- opinionated
- infuriating
- revealing
- amusing

... essential

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Avalon Peninsula



Lunch at Skipper Bens in Cupids



Steve Gillick

A tireless promoter of "infectious enthusiasm about travel", Steve delivers his wisdom once a month in his column *The Travel Coach*.

[Read more from Steve Gillick](#)