

MV

Client: Atlantic Canada
 Source: The Sunday Telegraph (Discover)
 Date: 18 September 2011
 Page: 1
 Reach: 501379
 Size: 3707cm2
 Value: 84816.16

THE WILD FRONTIER

Concerns about taking his young family camping in black bear country soon faded once **David Williams** set off along Canada's exhilarating Atlantic coast

You are in black bear country. On cycling and walking trails, ring your bell before bends to avoid surprising one. If you are attacked, act dead." My kids were thrilled when they read the leaflet - we were desperate to see a bear or a moose, despite the advertised dangers. More importantly, we had discovered what we'd been seeking on our three-week exploration of rugged, enchanting (and only occasionally threatening) Maritime Canada, a region in the south-east of the country surrounded and shaped by the Atlantic Ocean. It's home to wildernesses largely untamed by human hand, playgrounds where we could camp under the stars within earshot of waves crashing on the beach. Where we could canoe, cycle, sail, hike, swim in the sea... and warm ourselves around our campfire as daytime sun faded into cooler, isolating dusk. And if that warning leaflet at Kouchibouguac - a vast national park one third of the way through our road trip - was alarming, it only served to hone the excitement that had been mounting since we signed the rental agreement for our recreational vehicle

(RV) in Halifax after a six-hour flight from Gatwick.

Truth to tell, the rental agreement was more daunting than any bear encounter, with stiff penalties for windscreen or bodywork damage, or failing to return the 30ft monster on time. But first-night nerves were soon soothed by pounding Atlantic waves as we plotted a course along the Lighthouse Route, a winding road that traces the craggy outline of southern Nova Scotia, sweeping us past whitewashed clapboard homesteads clinging between sandy coves and almost Alpine forests. Think *The Waltons* crossed with *Heidi* - on the coast.

There was just four hours' time difference so jet lag was but a fleeting companion at the launch of a family adventure that was to see us clock up 1,700 road miles and three ferry crossings as we investigated Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince

CONTINUED OVERLEAF



Client: Atlantic Canada
Source: The Sunday Telegraph (Discover)
Date: 18 September 2011
Page: 1
Reach: 501379
Size: 3707cm2
Value: 84816.16



FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Edward Island, provinces often overshadowed by better known regions but with their own stunning landscapes and stories to tell, especially for adventure-loving families.

The big CanalDream RV was intimidating at first. But its lazy V10 engine, automatic gearbox and television-sized wing mirrors made easy work of the well-paved roads. And Canadian drivers are very polite - not one horn blast all the way.

The size of our "wagon" meant plenty of room for four, with a yacht-style galley, comfortable bunks above the driving cab for our 11 year olds and a queen size room at the rear for my wife and me.

For while we RVers like to see ourselves as pioneers, it isn't roughing it at all, really. With nightly rental costs similar to fees for a good motel, RVs boast fridges, cookers, microwaves, showers and air conditioning. Coolest feature? Our children fought to press the button that sent the "dinette" sliding out sideways, creating an extra "room" while parked.

In most Canadian campsites RVs plug directly into fresh water, drains and electricity. RVers get their own picnic bench and fire pit; poking a stick into a fire as night falls is almost mandatory, with campsites selling firewood for \$5-\$7 (£3-£4.50) a bundle. Perfect for toasting "smores", a sticky but heartening mix of marshmallow, chocolate and biscuits.

And the niceties of national and provincial park campsites? Let's just say that what they lack in shower and lavatory-block refinement, they compensate for with some of the finest settings Nature has devised. And there's always the RV for your ablutions.

Our first stop was at Peggy's Cove where ghostly white boulders cradle a child's picture-book lighthouse. Then we motored through endless pretty fishing villages such as Mahone and Lunenburg, home to the Fisheries Museum, which won a "cool" rating from the kids for its hands-on activities.



Client: Atlantic Canada
Source: The Sunday Telegraph (Discover)
Date: 18 September 2011
Page: 1
Reach: 501379
Size: 3707cm2
Value: 84816.16



Then our first taste of wilderness at the Kejimikujik 147-square-mile National Park, whose rolling hills and waterways are home to moose, bear, red squirrels and ancient hemlock forests.

We reclined in the wooden amphitheatre for an awe-inspiring "tour" of the night sky in this dark sky preserve.

By day we canoed the waterways, spotting turtles, eagles and beavers before swimming in the dark brown waters off Slapfoot Beach. By evening we dined by the flickering light of our campfire and sang when we heard rustling in the woods.

Highway 101 – where you marvel at the sight of Trans-Canada Tarmac stretching

into pinprick infinity for six or seven miles at a time – took us to the Bay of Fundy and our chance to get muddy in tides that surge through this natural "funnel", creating the world's highest tidal range.

First we played the hooligan in wave-riding power boats. Then, in sunset tranquillity, we kayaked from the shores of New Brunswick at Hopewell Rocks – towering pinnacles carved by the sea and with verdant "islands" bristling at their summit – gliding through ancient rock archways with circling bald eagles for company. Next day we walked the seabed 55ft below where, hours earlier, we had rippled the mirror-like sea with our paddles.

Ziplining was also thrilling – whizzing along cables suspended between pylons, in harnesses, high above frothing Reversing Falls at Saint John.

Highway 11 swished us past majestic hillside forests farther into New Brunswick and Kouchibouguac National Park, where we swam in the sea and cycled along isolated trails. We saw no bears but they kept us on our toes all the same.

How to sun up lovely Grand Manan Island, a two-hour ferry ride from Black Harbour, New Brunswick? "Quaint", "charming", "friendly" and "peaceful" are the stock adjectives and it's hard to improve on them. We

camped with a view of the sea and went to see humpback and minke whales spouting yards from the boat. No wonder this is renowned as one of the world's finest locations for whale-watching.

In the Maritimes if you're not paddling or swimming in the sea, you're being tempted to eat what's in it, especially if it's lobster. It would have been churlish not to do so, and we dined in high style at the Rossmount Inn in St Andrews. Seafood was never so sublime.

And always, we awoke to the thrill of hitting the road and discovering a new destination, because that's what an RV is about.

After a cycle tour of historic,

gentle St Andrews town (in kilts with Ripple Fitness, daft but fun) we crossed breathtaking eight-mile-long Confederation Bridge into Prince Edward Island, or PEI.

PEI is "The Gentle Island" and after our mainland adventures it seemed almost too tame. But we unwound on some of Canada's finest sandy beaches, explored its estuaries by kayak and joined queues of tourists keen to see the *Anne of Green Gables* house, for this is where the novel was based, and written.

So did we encounter our bear, or a moose? On the penultimate day of our adventure, after leaving PEI by ferry, we hadn't seen either. So we drove to

Shubenacadie Wildlife Park near Halifax before returning the RV. Its moose had died of old age, days before. But a big, friendly, black bear rolled in the sun. And he didn't seem the least bit surprised to see us: no singing – or bicycle bells – required.



You can comment on this article by emailing yoursay@telegraph.co.uk. You can also post comments at telegraph.co.uk/travel or send a text. Text the word YOURSAY followed by a space then your message to 87474. Texts cost 26p plus your standard network rate



Client: Atlantic Canada
Source: The Sunday Telegraph (Discover)
Date: 18 September 2011
Page: 1
Reach: 501379
Size: 3707cm2
Value: 84816.16



ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE

CanadianAffair (020 7616 9999; www.canadianaffair.com) offers direct flights every Thursday to Halifax from Gatwick, from £436. Air Canada (0871 220 1111; www.aircanada.com) offers direct flights to Halifax from Heathrow daily during the summer, from £632.

PACKAGES

CanadianAffair (020 7616 9999; www.canadianaffair.com) will book your camper van through CanaDream from £109 per day (two adults and one child, including insurance) and non-stop return flights from Gatwick to Halifax (see above).

Frontier Canada (020 8776 8709; www.frontier-canada.co.uk) offers a 14-night Maritime Treasures package taking in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI by RV from £1,225, including one overnight in Halifax and 14 nights' RV hire. Flights from £690 per person if booked before January 31 2012.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

For ideas of what to do in the region, visit the **Atlantic Canada** website (www.atlanticcanadaholiday.co.uk). For travel advice visit the Canadian Tourism Commission's website (www.canada.travel).

To plan your route, visit CanaDream's website (www.canadream.com/trip planning). Find campsites at www.camping-canada.com/camp_search_e.asp. Some of the best scenery is in national and provincial parks where you pay to camp – it's best to book in advance. Washroom facilities are basic and dated compared with ones in the United States – but you have your own in your RV. Pre-book a hotel for your first night; you'll be too tired to drive your RV safely on arrival and many RV firms forbid it.

WHAT IT COSTS

Renting a big four to six-berth RV for 19 nights for four people will cost up to £4,835, including unlimited mileage (it's best to include "unlimited mileage" in the rental deal to avoid shocks later). RV campsite fees in national and provincial parks are around £20 per night. Also budget for national and provincial park entry permits: around £18 per night. Budget for fuel. A big RV has a 200-litre tank (£165 to fill). Our fuel bill for 1,700 miles was £600.

THE INSIDE TRACK

- Camping in national and provincial parks means going back to nature at its best, but their remoteness often means few, if any, cafés or restaurants. Stock up at supermarkets en route and cook in your RV or over the fire.
- Enjoy delicious seafood lunches at fishing villages throughout the Maritimes.



Client: Atlantic Canada
Source: The Sunday Telegraph (Discover)
Date: 18 September 2011
Page: 1
Reach: 501379
Size: 3707cm2
Value: 84816.16



- Tim Hortons diners on most main routes are reliably good/inexpensive for on-the-move coffees, sandwiches and pastries.
- Ask campsites for a "three-way pitch" (mains water, electricity and drains) when booking.
- RV firms provide all you need, including bedding, crockery, cooking utensils, towels and flannels, at a charge of £51 per person, but pack your own beach towels plus electrical plug adaptors for your RV. Also pack repellent and bite relief cream; insects are rife during evenings at wooded campsites.
- Pack layers of clothing: Maritime summer weather can be similar to Britain's; a mixture of rain and sun but with higher daytime temperatures.

WHEN TO GO

June to the first week of October. The warmest months are August and September.

ADVENTURES/TREATS TO BOOK EN ROUTE

- Kayaking, Hopewell Rocks, Baymount Adventures (001 887 601 2660; www.baymountadventures.com).
- Zipwiring, Saint John Adventures (506 634 9477; www.saintjohnadventures.ca).
- Shubenacadie Tidal Bore Rafting (902 758 4032; www.raftingcanada.ca).
- Whales-n-Sails (506 662 1999; www.whales-n-sails.com) is good for whale-watching trips.
- Cycling, Ripple Fitness at St Andrews (506 466 8388; kurt@ripplefitness.ca; www.ripplefitness.ca).
- Traditional Lobster Supper, New Glasgow Lobster Suppers (902 964 2870; www.peilobstersuppers.com).

THE BEST CAMPSITE IN NOVA SCOTIA

Jeremy's Bay Campground, Kejimikujik National Park E

Superb back-to-nature camping in beautiful forests next to vast lakes ideal for swimming and canoeing and with clean sandy beaches. The site's pitches have fire boxes and facilities include playgrounds, lavatories, hot showers, hiking trails teeming with wildlife and daily "interpretive" programmes and tours. There is also a canteen for basic snacks and drinks (902 682 2772; www.parkscanada.gc.ca; from £14 per night).

THE BEST CAMPSITE IN NEW BRUNSWICK

South Kouchibouguac, Kouchibouguac National Park E

Tranquil pitches in huge, sprawling parkland with coastal and inland lake beaches. Facilities include a café, cycle and canoe hire, cycle trails and an attractive boardwalk to the coastal beach. Pitches include picnic bench and fire pit but washroom facilities are basic (877 737 3783; www.pccamping.ca; from £18.20 per night).

THE BEST CAMPSITE IN PEI

Cavendish Campground, Prince Edward Island National Park E

Cheek by jowl with stunning Cavendish beach, a broad, six-mile sweep of soft sand with lifeguards. Pitches are screened by foliage but tracks become very muddy in wet weather. Washroom facilities are antiquated, but there is a laundry.

The site is a five-minute drive from Cavendish town, with its restaurants, shops and funfairs. Its obsession with *Anne of Green Gables* includes "Avonlea Village – Village of Green Gables", for a "taste of what it was like to live in Anne's time on PEI over 100 years ago" (877 737 3783; www.pccamping.ca; from £19 per night).

DID YOU KNOW?

There are more than 40 lighthouses along the Lighthouse Route, each of them different



Client: Atlantic Canada
Source: The Sunday Telegraph (Discover)
Date: 18 September 2011
Page: 1
Reach: 501379
Size: 3707cm2
Value: 84816.16



WHAT TO AVOID

- Don't forget to pre-book transfers between first and last night hotels and the RV centre.
- Don't speed near schools or roadworks, where fines double.
- Avoid camping too far from the RV centre on your last night – it will be difficult to make the 10am return time and there are stiff penalties for lateness.
- Don't buy fuel away from populated centres; prices rocket in remote areas.
- Avoid night driving, when bear, moose and deer are most likely to stray on to the roads.
- Don't follow other vehicles closely; windscreen damage means a penalty when you return the RV.
- Avoid RV satnav rental charges (£7 per night) by taking your own. Check it covers Canada before leaving home.

WELCOME TO DISCOVER



Tell us about a recent holiday in a choice of three destinations and you could win two nights at the Radisson Edwardian Mercer Street Hotel in London's Covent Garden. For further details, please turn to p7.

Elsewhere, the journalist, broadcaster and veteran war correspondent John Simpson explains why he loves Johannesburg – and why he'd really rather not be sent to Switzerland. You can find out why on p13.

Maggie O'Sullivan
Discover editor



Client: Atlantic Canada
Source: The Sunday Telegraph (Discover)
Date: 18 September 2011
Page: 1
Reach: 501379
Size: 3707cm2
Value: 84816.16



Happy campers: the Williams family, top, take a break at Cape Bear lighthouse on PEI; the Bay of Fundy, above right; and Hopewell Rocks, above



Client: Atlantic Canada
Source: The Sunday Telegraph (Discover)
Date: 18 September 2011
Page: 1
Reach: 501379
Size: 3707cm2
Value: 84816.16



Elk and safety: despite the warnings, the Williams didn't spot a moose, though turtles, inset, were more plentiful. Cape Tryon lighthouse, left, and Halifax, top, the start and finish of the family's drive along the Lighthouse Route

