

# Acadian experience awaits in Nova Scotia

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**L**OBSTER Benedict, lobster chowders and stew, lobster casserole, several full lobster meals — along with Digby scallops in Digby, several raw oyster tastings and enough mussels to feed the proverbial army — plus the unique chowder clam known in the Maritimes as quahogs.

During a week travelling along the Nova Scotia coast from Yarmouth to Halifax, I never had one meal that consisted of any of my usual meat entrées. It was a seafood lover's dream.

My journey to the east coast was to attend a travel media conference in Yarmouth (don't ever pronounce the second syllable as mouth: it is Yarmuth). Make the error and you will quickly, but politely, be corrected, as the locals recognize you are from away. Other than that, you will be hard-pressed to find another place where the residents will make you feel more at home.

Yarmouth itself has a population of just over 7,000 — and most of the other communities along that portion of the Acadian shores are even less populated — and each one seems to offer the best in small-town hospitality.

The original peoples of the area consisted of several Mi'kmaq bands who occupied the land for centuries before the first French settlers arrived in the 1600s. Today fully half of the residents boast an Acadian heritage.

One of the ways tourists can experience an immersive Acadian experience is to attend, as we did, one of the kitchen party events put on several times over the summer for tourists.

This is the way to have fun. It's a toe tapping introduction as the fiddlers, other musicians and singers move your heart/beat up a tempo or two to match the music. And no one escapes the opportunity — rather the insistence — that you learn to play the spoons and participate in the raunchiness.

Alternate non-seafood menus are available, but lobster is the only choice for most. It comes with a full plate, along with a lesson on how to easily and most efficiently crack the lobster open to capture every last morsel of this succulent delicacy.

The stories of the Mi'kmaq, the Acadians and the later New England settlers — who were attracted in the mid-1750s by the offer of free land after the expulsion of the Acadians; those who would not be loyal to the British crown — are preserved in walking tours available during the peak season. Its seafaring history, from the time when it was the second largest port in Canada, is well-illustrated in the Yarmouth County Museum.

While its days as the harbour where ships from around the world sailed to and from are past — it is still the port where the regionally famous Bay Ferries CAT vessel takes people, with or without their vehicles, between Yarmouth and Bar Harbour in Maine.

While we were in Yarmouth, the Bluenose II was docked in the harbour and was open daily for visitors to climb aboard and walk through this historic vessel. Bluenose II moves



A lobster feed at a Yarmouth kitchen party is always a tasty treat.

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around the province's ports during the tourist season. Take the opportunity to climb aboard if it is nearby during your visit.

Yarmouth is a progressive cultural community with a number of museums and galleries including the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, a firefighters museum, and the Sweeney Fishers Museum.

While its largest mall and the usual fast-food options are located along Starrs Road, it is Main Street and those which intersect with it where you can find the local shops, restaurants and bars. Most have made their homes in the old historical buildings and really highlight the essence of what made this visit such an enjoyable experience.

There is no shortage of public art along Yarmouth streets and Frost Park located right off Main Street was a wonderful place to stop and rest while discovering those historic structures from its beginnings in the early 1800s, many built with a dominant Victorian influence.

While this was not meant to be a golf excursion, I could not resist the opportunity to have at least one game on one of the oldest courses in Nova Scotia, the Yarmouth Links Golf and Country Club. With a view of the Atlantic Ocean and its local lighthouse from its higher holes, the winds coming off the sea make the course a definite challenge, even for very good golfers.

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The Bluenose II is a popular attraction.