

## Grand Newfoundland Birdwatching Itinerary

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### Tour Overview

Our Newfoundland birding tour offers a remarkable diversity of spectacular scenery unlike anywhere else in North America.

Nature abounds. Fabulous seabird colonies dot the Avalon Peninsula - thousands of Northern Gannets, Atlantic Puffins, Black-legged Kittiwakes and both murrelets, with lesser numbers of Razorbills and Black Guillemots, are nesting at this time.

Caribou and moose are often photographable along the roadsides. Landbirds include such interesting species as Gray-cheeked Thrush, Boreal Chickadee, Blackpoll Warbler, crossbills, and Rock and Willow Ptarmigan.

We spend three days in Gros Morne National Park, a stunningly beautiful area of mountains, fjords, sand dunes and wetlands.

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### Itinerary

#### Day 1: Arrival - St. John's



Our Newfoundland birding tour commences with an evening meet & greet in St. John's - North America's oldest city perched on the eastern edge of the continent. If time and weather permits, we may squeeze in a visit to historic Signal Hill for panoramic views over the city and/or some leisurely evening birding. Overnight in St. John's.

### **Days 2-3: St. John's and Witless Bay Ecological Reserve**



The first two days of our tour will be spent exploring the northeast Avalon Peninsula. St. John's offers a wealth of ponds, parks and ocean vistas to enjoy. Local birds include a variety of waterfowl, northern gulls & boreal songbirds, and we will keep an eye out for lingering visitors such as Tufted Duck and Black-headed Gulls. We will also visit North America's most easterly point at Cape Spear National Historic Park, which is also a great place to scan for icebergs, seabirds and migrating whales. There will be unique opportunities to experience the region's deep-rooted culture and history. On one day we will take a boat tour in the Witless Bay Ecological Reserve - a series of islands that is home to North America's largest Atlantic Puffin and second largest Common Murre colonies. They are joined by masses of Black-legged Kittiwakes, Razorbills, and even a few Northern Fulmars. The only thing more amazing than the sound of thousands of seabirds chattering is the incredible point-blank views as we cruise around these protected islands. Overnight in St. John's.

### **Days 4-5: Southeast Avalon Peninsula**



The "Irish Loop", named for the area's strong cultural roots, includes coastal headlands, seascapes and historic villages. Scenery is stark and beautiful. We will make several stops to bird the scrubby woodlands typical of the peninsula, listening for boreal songbirds such as Blackpoll Warbler, Boreal Chickadee and Fox Sparrow. The many sheltered bays and inlets dotting the coast offer chances to look for Arctic Terns and other seabirds. We will also make our first forays into some of the world's most southerly expanses of subarctic tundra in search of barrens species such as Horned Lark, American Pipit and Willow Ptarmigan. Rugged coastlines offer excellent opportunities to find seabirds, including the elusive Manx Shearwater which nests off the island's south coast. We will also keep an eye out for Short-tailed Swallowtail, a beautiful butterfly with a very restricted range outside of Newfoundland. There may be opportunities to see some of the Woodland Caribou herd that resides in this region, and we will always be on the lookout for Moose! Cultural highlights may include visits to the historic town of Ferryland (home to one of North America's oldest settlements, the storied Colony of Avalon dating back to 1621) and the stunning vista of Cape Race where the famous distress calls of the Titanic were received more than a hundred years ago. Several historic lighthouses will be seen along the way. Overnight Day 4: Trepassey. Overnight Day 5: St. Bride's

## Day 6: Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve



During the morning we will visit breath-taking Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve. The steep cliffs here are home to one of the largest colonies of Northern Gannet in North America and thousands of other seabirds, including the worlds southernmost breeding Thick-billed Murres. The area offers spectacular scenery and very close views of the gannet colony, allowing for excellent photographic opportunities. We then follow the coast to Castle Hill National Historic Site, looking for passerines such as Pine Grosbeak and Grey-cheeked Thrush. Castle Hill is so named for the French and English fortifications dating back to the mid-1600s, and the top of the hill overlooks scenic Placentia Bay. We end our day by leaving the Avalon Peninsula behind and driving west across the narrow isthmus that connects it to the rest of Newfoundland. Overnight: Charlottetown.

## Days 7-8: Terra Nova National Park



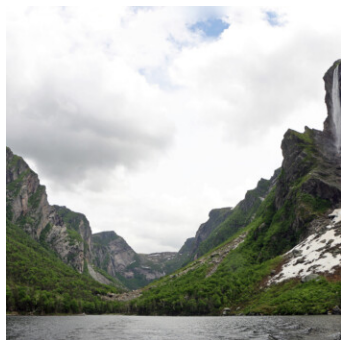
We will spend two days exploring a variety of coastal and upland habitats in Terra Nova National Park which includes sheltered bays, steep cliffs and rich boreal forests. We will be looking primarily for boreal bird species including eastern Palm Warblers, Spruce Grouse, Black-backed Woodpeckers, Gray Jays and an endemic/endangered subspecies of Red Crossbill. Around the many bogs and wetlands we will search for orchids and listen for the unique songs of Rusty Blackbird and Olive-sided Flycatcher, among many other birds. Snowshoe Hare and Moose are fairly common in the park. Overnight Day 7: Charlottetown. Overnight Day 8: Grand Fall-Windsor.

## Day 9: Central Newfoundland



Habitats change dramatically as we work west across the island. The forests of central Newfoundland include far more hardwoods and deciduous trees than we have encountered thus far, and we will begin to encounter a new variety of songbirds that may include Swainson's Thrush, Alder Flycatcher, Lincoln's Sparrow and more diverse warblers. Time permitting, we may visit the Mary March Provincial Museum which chronicles the prehistoric native people that once lived on the island. The afternoon will be dedicated to travel as we traverse further west to Gros Morne National Park. Overnight: Rocky Harbour.

## Days 10-11: Gros Morne National Park



Gros Morne National Park has been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its unique and globally important geological features. It also offers excellent opportunities for birding and wildlife viewing. Our meanderings through the park will include strolls along sandy beaches, rugged coastlines, rich bogs and lush forests. New birds may include vireos, Mourning Warbler, Harlequin Duck and possibly Piping Plover (an endangered species that now breeds very sporadically in the province). Weather permitting, we will take a boat tour into beautiful Western Brook Pond - one of Newfoundland's most iconic scenes. On another day we will visit the surreal Tablelands which consists of a large piece of the earth's mantle driven up from deep below the ocean floor (this can be seen at only a few places on earth). We may expect to spot Woodland Caribou, Moose and Harbour Seals during our travels, and will take time to enjoy a variety of beautiful orchids that can be found in the park. Overnight Day 10: Rocky Harbour. Overnight Day 11: Deer Lake.

## Day 12: Depart for Home

Participants depart from Deer Lake (airport code YDF). Our Newfoundland birding tour ends today and participants can depart anytime.

## What to Expect

Early morning birding will be the usual beginning to the day on our Newfoundland birding tour, depending upon the day's activities. Most days have a small to moderate amount of driving; there will be two longer drives across the island, but we make several stops along the way. Several optional early morning or evening excursions may be offered (especially to look for moose, which are more active around dawn and dusk).

Weather can be variable; warm cloudless days can alternate with cool foggy days, and we will plan our daily itinerary accordingly. It is a good idea to have footwear that is waterproof. There are two boat trips scheduled; the trip into the Witless Bay Ecological Reserve can be cool, so appropriate layered clothing is recommended. The boats themselves are comfortable, with shelter and lots of seating space, and the captains are usually very entertaining! The trip down Western Brook Pond should be fairly calm.

Most trails and paths are easy to moderate. Bring mosquito repellent - mosquitoes are not usually a problem anywhere except perhaps in sheltered trails.

Each evening, the list of birds and other wildlife will be reviewed, and plans for the next day discussed.

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# What's Included

## **Tour Price Includes**

- All accommodation (good quality)
- Includes all breakfasts and lunches
- Boat trips to seabird colonies and on land-locked fjord
- Ground transportation
- 4 - 7 participants with one guide, 8 - 12 participants with two guides
- All park, conservation and entrance fees

## **Tour Price Does Not Include**

- Flights to and from start/end location
  - Evening meals
  - Travel Insurance
  - Items of a personal nature
  - Taxes (15% HST)
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