

## New Brunswick & Grand Manan Itinerary

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### Tour Overview

Our New Brunswick & Grand Manan birding tour combines diverse bird life with beautiful panoramas of wildflowers, picturesque fishing villages and fabulous views of whales.

We visit Grand Manan Island when fall migration peaks for several groups of birds, and we could see well over 20 species of warblers, including a good chance for rarities like Prairie Warbler.

The interior forests support breeding populations of Black-backed Woodpecker, Spruce Grouse, White-winged Crossbill and Boreal Chickadee.

Seabirds are diverse; along with Black Guillemots and Northern Gannets, we are quite likely to see Great and Sooty Shearwaters, Razorbills, Atlantic Puffins, Common and Arctic Terns, and Northern Fulmars, and there is always a good chance of seeing jaegers, Storm-Petrels and Black-legged Kittiwakes.

We also take in the amazing shorebird concentrations of the Bay of Fundy, renowned for the highest tides on earth, and the sand dunes of Kouchibouguac National Park.

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### Itinerary

#### Day 1: Arrival in Saint John, NB



Our New Brunswick & Grand Manan birding tour officially begins in the evening in our hotel lobby where we will meet and head off to a nearby restaurant for dinner. Night in Saint John.

## Day 2: Fundy National Park and Mary's Point - Shepody National Wildlife Area



We depart early from Saint John and visit Fundy National Park, where we'll take in a couple of nature trails, looking for boreal forest species such as Boreal Chickadee, Canada Jay and White-winged Crossbill, and keeping a watch for Moose. We then head along the coastline to Mary's Point Shepody National Wildlife Area, where, during early August, Semipalmated Sandpipers gather in the hundreds of thousands. Even though we will be past this peak, there will still be large numbers present. The sight of all these birds twisting and turning in unison is an awesome spectacle. There will almost certainly be Peregrines and Merlins attracted by the shorebirds here. Nearby is a collection of freshwater dykes and marshes, edged by a nature trail, which we will explore for other shorebirds, gulls and terns. If time permits we will explore more of the Shepody Bay area, including the amazing flowerpot formations of Hopewell Rocks Provincial Park. Night in Moncton.

## Day 3: Johnson's Mills, Tantramar Marshes and Sackville Waterfowl Park



We leave Moncton early and head to Johnson's Mills Shorebird Reserve for some morning shorebird watching. Even when the tide is low this remarkable area provides excellent views of foraging sandpipers and plovers. From here we will make our way to Sackville and spend the rest of the morning exploring the Tantramar Marshes which border onto neighbouring Nova Scotia looking for marsh dwellers like Sora and Virginia Rail, American Coot, Common Moorhen, various waterfowl such as American Wigeon, Northern Pintail and Lesser Scaup plus open habitat species like Northern Harrier, and Nelson's Sparrow. We also visit the Sackville Waterfowl Park where a surprisingly diverse collection of waterfowl, rails and shorebirds can be seen from the observation tower, 2 km of boardwalk and picnic facilities. At day's end we will travel north to Richibucto or St. Louis-de-Kent to spend the night.

## Day 4: Kouchibouguac National Park



Kouchibouguac National Park is a beautiful assemblage of seashore, salt marshes, barrier beach, boreal forests and acid bogs. Here we will hope to catch up with the endangered Piping Plover, which nests here. The salt marshes host large numbers of migrating shorebirds including Short-billed Dowitcher, Red Knot and Hudsonian Godwit and sometimes westerners like Baird's Sandpiper. Nelson's Sparrows nest in the marshes and Northern Gannets fish offshore. Further inland we will search for Pileated Woodpeckers and for flocks of migrant passerines including many warbler species, some of which nest here as well. We will investigate the Black Spruce bogs for northerners like Black-backed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee and Canada Jay. Night in Richibucto or Bouctouche.

## Day 5: Back to Saint John



We spend another morning in Kouchibouguac before heading out in the early afternoon for Saint John. The drive will take about 3.5 hours so we will be sure to arrive in time for dinner. Night in Saint John.

## Day 6: Ferry ride to Grand Manan



We depart early in the morning for Black's Harbour, about 90 minutes away from Saint John. We catch the 60-minute ferry for Grand Manan at Black's Harbour, docking at North Head on the island. The ferry ride itself can be exciting and very productive. Seabirds and marine mammals abound and we spend most of the trip watching for wildlife from the salon or on deck. Great and Sooty Shearwaters cruise the Grand Manan channel and we have a good chance of seeing Manx Shearwater and, possibly, some rarer species. Alcids flush from the ocean's surface as the ferry passes by, and we look particularly for Razorbills and Atlantic Puffins. Arctic and Common Terns are usually in sight throughout the trip. Marine mammals can be very exciting, and with luck we could encounter Fin, Minke, and Humpback Whales as we cross the channel. Harbour Porpoises should be close inshore at Black's Harbour and at North Head. The ferry ride itself is just one of several opportunities to see marine mammals during the week. Once docked, we drive the short distance to our home for the next three days, where we find friendly and comfortable accommodation that caters to naturalists. There is a naturalist's book for entries from guests, a library and a cheery lounge with a fireplace, and a broad veranda for just sitting outside and enjoying the view. After lunch, we take a couple of trails close to the inn, to the lighthouse at Swallowtail and to Whale Cove and the pond. We look for migrating passerines in the windblown trees en route to the lighthouse and we have a good chance of seeing marine mammals and seabirds off the headland. Night on Grand Manan island.

## Days 7-8: Exploring Grand Manan Island



Exploration of the island's various birding hotspots. We travel to the northern tip of the island to visit several excellent sites. We stop at the Whistle and Long Eddy Point, considered the best location on the island for landbirds, before they take off for the mainland and seabirds which forage along the rip tides just offshore. We visit Castalia Marsh, a salt marsh that can be very good for shorebirds, especially at high tide; 40 species of shorebirds have been reported here! We also visit Ingall's head, Miller Pond near the island's tiny airstrip, and Southwest Head for passerines and other boreal residents. On one day we take a pelagic trip out into the Bay of Fundy to look for seabirds and marine mammals. The trip lasts 4-6 hours and is very exciting! On our way out past the barrier islands we will hopefully encounter Razorbills, Great Cormorants that sit amongst numerous Double-crested Cormorants, and nesting Bald Eagles. Once we hit the deeper waters, small flocks of Red and Red-necked Phalaropes dot the surface of the ocean, while the first tubenoses begin to appear as we get further out from the barrier island. If the weather is calm, the spray of Humpback and Fin Whales can be seen great distances. The large rafts of shearwaters consisting of Great and Sooties may contain a few Manx Shearwaters. The occasional Northern Gannet flaps by and Atlantic Puffins appear out of nowhere with a beak full of fish. If we are lucky, a migrant Pomarine or Parasitic Jaeger will be attracted to large foraging groups of shearwaters. Graceful Wilson's Storm-Petrels dart in and out amongst the waves, as we try to pick out a Leach's Storm-Petrel. Arctic Terns fly by in small groups, and the first groups of Northern Fulmars and Black-legged Kittiwakes coming south appear here and there. Every trip finds something different on the Bay of Fundy! Nights on Grand Manan island.

## Day 9: Ferry Ride to Black's Harbour and return to Saint John



After spending the morning birding, we catch the ferry back to the mainland (again, watching for wildlife on the crossing), arriving in Saint John by mid-afternoon. Night in Saint John.

## Day 10: Departure

Our New Brunswick & Grand Manan birding tour ends today, you can depart for flights home anytime today.

## What to Expect

Our New Brunswick & Grand Manan birding tour will involve two 3-4 hour drives on separate days to reach prime birding destinations. Most days begin with breakfast at 6:30 - 7:00 a.m., followed at mid-day by a picnic lunch. When on Grand Manan Island we return to our hotel in the afternoon to have time to relax. Our schedule is flexible as it depends on driving times involved each day, and it allows participants time to explore historical aspects of the island on their own if they wish.

We explore a good portion of Grand Manan island during our stay. On one day we take a 4-6 h pelagic trip off the south end of the island into the Bay of Fundy. Because the island is small and traveling distances are not great, driving times are relatively short.

Weather in August is usually very pleasant, with warm days and cool nights, but there is always the chance of fog. It is a good idea to bring footwear that is waterproof. The pelagic boat trip can be quite cool, so appropriate layered clothing, gloves and hat are recommended. The ferries are comfortable, with shelter and lots of seating space. The pelagic boat trip is conducted using local fishermen's vessels, which comply with Canadian Safety Standards. These vessels can comfortably hold 30 people with bench seating.

Most trails and paths that we follow are moderately easy to navigate. Participants in good health should experience no problems with the terrain, as our pace will be leisurely. We recommend that you bring mosquito repellent, although mosquitoes are not usually a problem anywhere except perhaps in sheltered trails. Each evening, the list of birds and other wildlife will be reviewed during dinner, and plans for the next day will be discussed.

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## What's Included

### **Tour Price Includes**

- Good quality accommodation in New Brunswick
- Basic accommodation in Grand Manan
- Ferry ride to/from Grand Manan
- Boat trip into Bay of Fundy
- Includes all breakfasts and lunches
- 4 - 8 Participants will be guided by one guide. 9 - 12 participants will be guided by two guides.
- Gratuities to local guides
- All park, conservation and entrance fees

### **Tour Price Does Not Include**

- Flights to and from Saint John
  - Travel Insurance
  - Evening meals
  - Items of a personal nature
  - Taxes (15% HST)
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