



Dark Harbour, on Grand Manan Island, is popular for seaweed harvesting (and weir fishing). Sarah Heckles of Brighton, left, and Judy Woolridge, who lives on the island, harvest dulse, a seaweed that is made into seasoning and exported worldwide. The coast is a hiker's dream — and a workout in watching your step.

Canadian island and its lives rest on seaweed

By Kari J. Bodnarchuk

GRAND MANAN ISLAND, New Brunswick — The eerie bellowing of a nearby foghorn punctuated the night air, cutting through the mist and echoing off an island less than a mile away. We slipped on oversized rubber boots that reached our knees, rolled up our sleeves, and began digging our hands into the thick purple seaweed, pulling it free from the slippery rocks and dumping it into an orange laundry basket.

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If you go ...

How to get there

Grand Manan is about 360 miles from Boston, about a 61/2-hour drive. From Boston, take Interstate 93 north to Interstate 95 north for about 230 miles. Pick up Route 395 east, following signs for Route 9, and take Route 9 for about 90 miles to the Canadian border at Calais, Maine. From Calais, take Route 1 north to Route 776 to Blacks Harbour

Coastal Transport 506-662-3724

www.coastaltransport.ca Runs numerous 90-minute car ferries between Blacks Harbour on the mainland and Grand Manan each day; \$8 per person, \$24 per vehicle.

Where to stay **Shorecrest Lodge**

100 Route 776 506-662-3216 www.shorecrestlodge.com Run by two super-friendly, former Cape Cod residents, Guenther Bogensperger and Evelyn Paine. Ten rooms, \$60-

Swallowtail Inn 50 Lighthouse Road

North Head 506-662-1100 www.swallowtailinn.com On the tip of North Head Peninsula. Six rooms with fabulous ocean views, though sleeping can be a challenge if the fog rolls in: Swallowtail Lighthouse (and its very effective foghorn) sits just several hundred feet away. Rooms \$55-\$100.

Where to eat Inn at Whale Cove Lodge and Cottages

26 Whale Cove Cottage Road 506-662-3181 www.holidayjunction.com A small and cozy inn near the north end of the island. Seared scallops, lamb curry, and chicken and fiddlehead crepes are highlights. Daily 6-8 p.m.. Entrees \$11-\$20. Reservations reauired.

McLaughlin's Wharf Inn 1863 Route 776

Seal Cove 506-662-8760 On the water and open for dinner daily 5:30-8 p.m. in summer. Extensive selection of seafood dishes, plus a few steak, chicken, and pasta meals. Try the curried squash soup. Fantastic bread made daily. Entrees \$9.50-\$17.50. Reservations required.

What to do **Adventure High**

83 Route 776 North Head 800-732-5492

www.adventurehigh.com Three- to six-hour sea kayaking trips, plus two-hour sunset tours and moonlight paddles. Two-hour trip \$31 per person, day trip \$79 per person. Cycling, too.

Whales-n-Sails Adventures

888-994-4044 www.whales-n-sails.com Whale-watching trips twice a day (11:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.) from North Head aboard a 56-foot sailboat. Adults \$52, children \$32.

Grand Manan Museum

1143 Route 776 506-662-3424 www.grandmananmuseum.ca Houses the Grand Manan Visitors Information Centre, and offers information on local birds, history, and wildlife. Monday-Friday in September, 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Free; donations accepted.

More information Grand Manan Tourism Association

888-525-1655 www.grandmanannb.com

When the basket was full, we dumped its slithery contents into the back of Reid Ross's pickup truck, which was angled so that its headlights lit up the field of seaweed around us.

We were on an island we had reached over a sandbar at low tide, off the east coast of Grand Manan Island in New Brunswick, and one thing was certain: This was no ordinary Friday night for my friend Sarah and me, Bostonians both.

"We come out here every day," said Ross, 39, a lifelong resident of Grand Manan, who has been harvesting seaweed since he was 16.

"Or twice a day when the tides are right," said his friend Judy Woolridge, who was showing us how to identify and extract the dulse, a local seaweed that is darker, thicker, and more flavorful than other varieties and, thus, better quality. "This is one of the best places to find dulse."

Grand Manan considers itself the "dulse capital of the world" and residents earn their living by hand-picking the edible seaweed at low tide, drying it on fields of beach rocks, then selling it to a local cooperative, which ships it around the world.

According to Woolridge, this "sea vegetable" can be eaten right out of the bag as a crunchy snack, ground into flakes and used as seasoning in soups, salads, or pasta, or dry-roasted in a skillet and eaten. I am a fan of seaweed spa treatments and enjoy a hint of the spice in certain meals, but what piqued my interest in this local industry was the act of harvesting seaweed.

Last summer, Sarah and I took a road trip from Boston to New Brunswick and spent a week exploring the province's east coast: biking coastal trails, kayaking around barrier islands in a national park, visiting the Acadian Peninsula for an annual French Acadian festival, and stopping on Grand Manan to try our hands at dulsing.

Although Grand Manan belongs to New Brunswick, it's just 8 miles off the coast of Maine (and about 21 miles from the Canada mainland) and is accessible from Eastport, Maine, by way of Deer Island, Campobello Island, (home of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt's rustic 34-room summer cottage), and Letete in southern New Brunswick. Alternatively, it's just a 6-hour drive from Boston to Blacks Harbour on the province's south coast, where you can catch a 90-minute ferry ride to the island. That's what we did.

Grand Manan is 15 miles long by 6 miles wide. The rugged west coast is dominated by cliffs that rise to 400 feet, rocky beaches with driftwood the size of telephone poles, and a few small settlements. The east coast has gen-



tler terrain and a majority of the island's roads and settlements. Here, the land is scalloped with coves, harbors, and pebbly beaches protected by nearly two dozen islands sprinkled off the coast.

Many of the 2,800 residents on the island know each other either by face or name, or at least know one another's business.

"If you haven't heard a rumor by 10 o'clock, start one," quipped a local man.

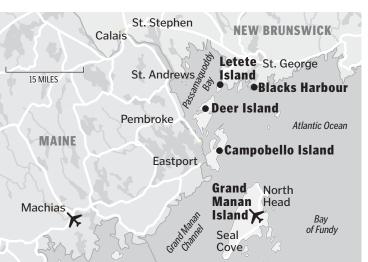
"It's a very simple life," said Guenther Bogensperger, who had moved from Cape Cod five months earlier to run the Shorecrest Lodge, where we were staying "People don't need or want a lot."

True to island style, Bogensperger set aside his daily errands to show us some of the highlights: Swallowtail Lighthouse on the cliffs of North Head, a deer farm, a lobster pound, herring weirs (round fishing traps that poke out of the water and are visible in coves and inlets around the island), the Sardine Museum in Seal Cove (Grand Manan is also the self-proclaimed "herring capital of the world"), and, of course, the local dulsing grounds.

Tourists usually come here for reasons other than harvesting seaweed. Forty-three miles of marked hiking trails wind along the cliffs, cut through the island's forested interior, and meander along the flatter east coast. The sea kayaking, too, is unbeatable, if challenging: The area has 27-to-30-foot tides (some of the highest in the world), water temperatures around 47 degrees, and fog that can roll in fast, so choosing a reputable guide or outfitter is essential.

Grand Manan is a top bird- and whale-watching spot. More than 1,000 birds — as many as 230 species - nest on the island, and you have a good chance of seeing puffins, razorbills, cormorants, eagles, ospreys, and peregrine falcons. Whale-watching by sailboat is popular, and minkes, finbacks, humpbacks, and Northern right whales are common.





GLOBE STAFF GRAPHIC/AARON ATENCIO

The island, once the summer home of novelist Willa Cather, is also home to artists' galleries, several small museums, and shops that sell local crafts and trinkets.

The Grand Manan tourist office doesn't officially market "seaweed harvesting" for tourists, but the dulsers we met seemed to welcome anyone who was interested in helping or simply watching and asking questions.

We met Ross and Woolridge at the dulsing grounds, a large field in the middle of the island blanketed in beach rocks and covered with netting to keep the dulse from sticking. They showed us the art of spreading out the dulse to dry. Some people shake their hands up and down to loosen the seaweed and let it fall freely; others toss clumps of it to the ground as if dealing cards. Each dulser develops a personal style.

Sarah and I had little finesse at first - our rows were clumpy but we eventually got the hang of it. Later, once the dulse had dried, Woolridge, Ross, and Wilbur Ingersoll, another local dulser, showed us how to flip the long rows of dried seaweed. This required a long pole with a piece of rope attached to each end. We rolled the dulse around the pole, like dough around a rolling pin, then flipped it over and unrolled it. Once the other side was dry probably the next day, after we had left — they would come back, roll up the dulse, bundle it, and drop it at the cooperative, which pays them about \$2 per pound.

As a parting gift, Woolridge and Ross gave us armloads of dried dulse and Bogensperger used his vacuum-packing machine to hermetically seal it for us -agood 40 baggies of seaweed.

Contact Kari Bodnarchuk, a freelance writer who lives in

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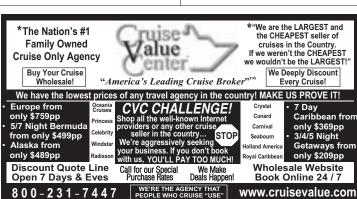
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