

SundayTravel

CANADA

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

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PHOTOS BY PAMELA WRIGHT FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

A sweeping lawn leads to Lake Massawippi at the Manor Hovey, an elegant Relais & Chateaux property.

# Trailing Detective Gamache in the Eastern Townships

BY DIANE BAIR AND PAMELA WRIGHT  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

“Welcome to Three Pines!” said Christane Guerra. “This is Louise’s home. She chose it for its peace and tranquility. It’s what inspired her.”

We were standing in the pretty little village of Knowlton in Quebec’s Eastern Townships region. Guerra was talking about Louise Penny, renowned author of the Detective Armand Gamache mystery series, and Three Pines, the series’ idyllic, out-of-the-way village, and home to its colorful and loving cast of characters.

Oh, how we love Chief Inspector Armand Gamache and his lovely Three Pines village. We’d been pining over Three Pines since it appeared in Penny’s first book, “Still Life,” published in 2005. We’ve read all of Penny’s Gamache novels and have already pre-ordered her next novel. After a year hiatus, Penny’s newest in the series, “The Grey Wolf,” comes out this year. Oct. 29 is the official publication date in the United States.

We couldn’t wait to finally visit the picturesque area that inspired her book settings. Suffice it to say, we’re big fans, but as it turned out, there are others more fervent than us, and they were on our tour.

A little background: the Eastern Townships, about an hour east of Montreal and about 4½ hours from Boston, borders Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. It has 32 mountain peaks, miles of hiking and biking trails, and acres of farmlands and vineyards. Tiny towns and villages dot the countryside, and farmers’ markets and veggie stands line the rural roads. This is where Penny lives, and what inspired many of the scenes and characters in her best-selling novels.

After several hours in the car, a stop at the Vignoble de l’Orpailleur, one of the oldest vineyards in the region, was a welcome break. The Eastern Townships, the birthplace of winemaking in Quebec, is home to some 30 vineyards. There’s even the official Brome-Missisquoi Wine Route, linking more than 20 of the wineries. We tasted a lovely Vignoble de l’Orpailleur Brut, a clean and crisp Rose, and a

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A classic general store sits in the center of Georgeville, a picturesque hamlet set on the shores of Lake Memphremagog.

## Bright spots abound on the Sunshine Coast Trail

By Kari Bodnarchuk  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

SARAH POINT, British Columbia — The captain nosed our zodiac up to a rocky beach and held it steady as my two kids and I carefully slid overboard. Barnacles crunched underfoot as we shuttled our gear to shore: Backpacks containing food and camping gear for four of the next eight days.

We hiked up onto a nearby bluff and looked out at the clear waters of a protected marine park in Desolation Sound, a few scraggly uninhabited islands, and the snow-dusted mountains on Vancouver Island in the hazy distance.

This peaceful spot, called Sarah Point, sits at the northernmost point of the Sunshine Coast, two ferry rides and several drives northwest of Vancouver — relatively accessible (with a bit of time on your side) and yet worlds away from mainland life.

Our plan was to hike from this idyllic far-flung spot on the tip of the Sunshine Coast about 112 miles south

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KARI BODNARCHUK FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Frogs sit on a log at Inland Lake, a pristine lake ringed by a level wheelchair-accessible path on British Columbia’s Sunshine Coast.

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**MAGICAL JOURNEYS**

Lana Gordon on ‘Hadestown,’ Thailand, Meryl Streep, and packing light

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A star-inspired Maine hotel, a look at Drift Nashville, and collapsible luggage

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CBS ENTERTAINMENT

Chris Foster and Mary Cardona-Foster on “The Amazing Race.”

## What it’s like to tour the world on ‘The Amazing Race’

By Lauren Daley  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Alba Cardona loved “The Amazing Race.”

The CBS globe-trotting reality competition gave the native Guatemalan a sense of adventure without having to leave her Waltham home. And soon, daughter Mary Cardona-Foster, and husband Chris Foster were watching with her.

In 2006, Cardona was diagnosed with cancer. She died months later.

So it was emotional when Cardona-Foster, now 27, and her dad, Chris Foster, 60, stood on a beach in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico: one of 13 teams on the starting line of season 36 of “The Amazing Race.”

“My dad has been raising me as a single dad since I was 10 years old,” Cardona-Foster, a GBH marketing manager, told host Phil Keoghan on the premiere. “He’s my teammate for life, so I wouldn’t want to do this with anybody else.”

The Waltham dad and daughter were eliminated on

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# Bright spots along the Sunshine Coast Trail

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to our car, parked in a dusty lot near the ferry landing at Saltery Bay. This route, called the Sunshine Coast Trail, is Canada’s longest hut-to-hut hiking trail, with 16 huts and shelters along the way that are available for anyone to stay for free — no reservations needed.

A group of local volunteers created the trail to link together parks and wilderness areas and to protect the area’s remaining old-growth trees — in a region that relies on the logging industry to survive. The Powell River Parks and Wilderness Society completed the route in 2000 and, thanks to a grant and private donations, went on to build huts, shelters, and composting toilets over the next 24 years. Some huts sit on mountain peaks overlooking islands and ocean or expansive valleys, while others lie tucked away in the woods on quiet lakes; four are winterized and have wood pellet stoves.

To reach the Sunshine Coast, you can catch a small plane from Vancouver International Airport or a float plane from downtown Vancouver to Powell River (the float plane lands on Powell Lake) or take a bus from Vancouver. Or you can drive and take ferries, as we did, and explore along the way: Don’t miss the village of Egmont where the year-round population of 50 swells to 2,000 come summertime, the unstaffed thrift store has an honor box, a rustic museum chronicles the area’s logging industry, and drag races occasionally take place on the airstrip. If you took Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom and put it on the ocean, it would feel a lot like this.

Whether you fly, take a bus, or drive, you can pre-book a transfer with Sunshine Coast Shuttle to take you (and your food caches) to any accessible trailhead, hut, or junction along the SCT route. We met the shuttle at the parking lot in Saltery Bay and gave the driver several bags with four days’ worth of hiking food, which the company would deliver to a food storage locker at Fiddlehead Landing Hut so we could resupply halfway through our trip.

The shuttle then drove us up to Lund, where we grabbed a couple of famous cinnamon buns from Nancy’s Bakery and hopped on Terracentric Coastal Adventures’ water taxi, which whisked us 15 minutes up the coast — past a 400-year-old killer whale petroglyph on the rocks — to the northern starting point of the SCT at Sarah Point.

I’ll admit, as the zodiac spun around and motored away, I felt both excitement and apprehension about the next eight days — and whether my 12- and 14-year-old kids would make it, even being experienced hikers. Because of time restrictions, we planned to complete the trail in eight days — an ambitious schedule by most standards — meaning we would have four 16- to 18-mile hiking days and little leeway to fall behind (thankfully, it stays light until after 10 p.m. in this region midsummer). We hoped to stay at a hut every night but had the option of camping off the trail or at established campgrounds along the way, if needed.

Most people hike north to south, as we did, for numerous reasons: There is significantly more trail signage heading south, it minimizes overcrowding at the huts, it makes it more of a wilderness experience since you see fewer people, and the SCT hiker’s bible (Earl Walz’s “Sunshine Coast Trail Guidebook”) follows the trail north to south, making the trail descriptions easier to follow. That said, even in mid-July, we had huts and camping areas to ourselves five out of eight nights, we went several days without seeing another person, and we passed only two people hiking in the opposite direction, on Day 6.

Despite the name, the trail doesn’t follow right along the coast. It spends much of its time in dense forests blanketed in moss and lichen, or areas where chest-high ferns line the path (we put our sunglasses away after the first day and rarely pulled them out). It also wanders by stands of old-growth western red cedar and Douglas fir, passes through massive clearcut areas, summits three mountains, and occasionally meanders by private homes or campgrounds. Still, in plenty of areas, the prevalence of madrona trees (called “arbutus” in Canada) signal that the ocean isn’t far away (these beautiful trees, common along the Pacific Northwest coast, have white flowers, edible berries, and smooth reddish-brown bark that peels in the summertime).

After leaving Sarah Point, we briefly made our way along a rocky bluff and then followed mellow forested terrain to the Bliss Portage Hut, a well-crafted cabin tucked in the woods with several wooden tent platforms for those who prefer sleeping outdoors. This hut, like many others, had wide steps leading up to a covered porch with benches and a cooking area, a fully enclosed first floor with a solid wooden table, and a steep ladder leading up to a one-room sleeping loft.

Many huts also have an outdoor picnic table and firepit, and metal food storage lockers where hikers can store all edible and scented items overnight. We met a family here and then didn’t see anyone for the next two days — or 32 miles. The SCT took us through fern and mossy forests, past the junction of the aptly named Trinket Trail (where hikers leave little trinkets in the trees or on logs like little shrines), and to a waterfall near Rieveley’s Pond Hut where we cooled off in a swimming hole.

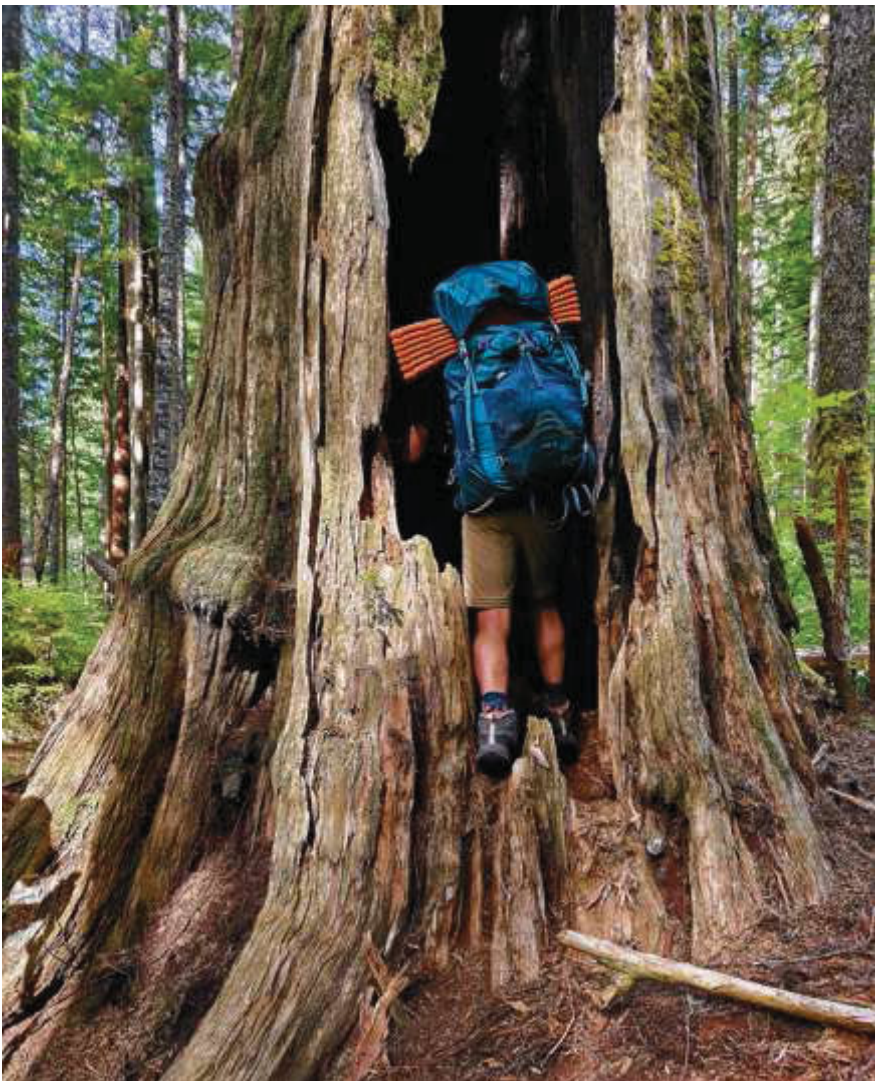
Near the end of a long hiking day — after dreaming about burgers for hours — we popped out at The Shinglemill Pub in Powell River, the only time the trail emerges in a town. When two local women overheard that the pub couldn’t serve us dinner (the kitchen was short-staffed), they offered to take us to the best pizza place in town (Granada’s) and to Tim Horton’s for doughnut holes, and then showed us around town — it’s that kind of place.

After Powell River, the trail winds around Inland Lake following a level path through Toad Alley — where western toads breed each summer — then up a steep hillside with a tangle of fallen trees (watch out for ground wasps on the route up to Confederation Lake), and eventually to Fiddlehead Landing on pristine Powell Lake, a quiet secluded spot overlooking Goat Island.

The trail underfoot on the Sunshine Coast Trail



PHOTOS BY KARI BODNARCHUK FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



**Top:** The writer’s son, 12-year-old Sam Wright, looks out at a lake and mountains on day five of the Sunshine Coast Trail hike while descending Tin Hat Mountain.

**Above left:** The writer’s daughter, 14-year-old Grace Wright, cools off by dipping her head in a waterfall near Rieveley’s Pond Hut.

**Above:** Sam looks inside the stump of an old tree.

**Left:** Confederation Lake Hut, a fully winterized hut with a wood pellet stove, was rebuilt in 2016 and sits on the edge of a mountain lake and an ancient fir tree forest.

## If you go . . .

**Sunshine Coast Trail website:** sunshine-coasttrail.com, a good starting point for trip planning, with links to downloadable maps, transportation options, trail info.

**Sunshine Coast Facebook page:** www.facebook.com/groups/1090494941149784; offers the most up-to-date information — from trail reroutes because of logging operations to water availability — from other hikers.

**Avenza Maps app:** Offers access to the 11 different SCT trail map sections and can show you in real-time where you are even while offline and out of cellphone range.

**Backeddy Resort and Marina, Egmont.** A great no-frills place to stay pre- or post-hike with cabins and glamping-style geodesic domes overlooking the ocean; near Skookumchuck Narrows Provincial Park, home to the famous standing waves. Rates start at \$73 for domes, \$154 for cabins. www.backeddy.ca, 604-542-6875.

KARI BODNARCHUK

varied as much as the views: Spongy, cushioned pine-needle paths; rocky riverbeds; boardwalks; dusty trails; rock slabs; wheelchair-accessible gravel paths, and super-steep scrambles up root-laced singletrack (which the kids called “baby switchies” because they zigzagged straight up rather than traversed the hillsides like the switchback trails we were used to).

We had our tough moments as we navigated the terrain — we endured multiple wasp stings, low water sources, and longer-than-anticipated hiking days (the mileage listed in the guidebook and even along the trail didn’t always match the mileage on our GPS devices, we discovered — often because of logging reroutes).

Thankfully, the tough times were buoyed by shining moments: Swimming in lakes along the way, napping in hammocks, waking up to the calls of loons, and experiencing the generosity of trail angels who left three gallons of ice-cold water in a

cooler on a stretch of trail with little water access (look out for dry sections after Manzanita Bluff and Fiddlehead Landing).

Another positive outcome of our challenging adventure: Watching my 14-year-old daughter transform from an unhappy hiker who kept asking if Dad could come pick her up or a Canadian Uber could take her home (a good six hours away) to an empowered teen who led the charge up the hiking trail, encouraged her younger brother when his energy dipped, and thanked me numerous times for bringing her along.

The final mellow hike over Mount Troubridge and down toward Saltery Bay offered plenty of hints that we were reaching the end, with stunning views of mountainous islands and of ferries crossing the inlet far below us.

The kids hugged our car when we emerged from the dusty trail on our final day, roughly 115 miles after the zodiac had dropped us on that bar-

nacled beach at Sarah Point. Still on a mission for burgers, we walked across the street to the hole-in-the-wall Saltery Bay Snack Shack where we had the most amazing maple-bacon burgers and started hatching a plan for our next adventure.

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