

Sunday Travel

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE AUGUST 29, 2021 | BOSTONGLOBE.COM/TRAVEL

Quebec's *best-kept secrets*

PHOTOS CHRISTOPHER MUTHER/GLOBE STAFF

Inside the elaborate Saint-Benoît-du-Lac Abbey in St-Benoît-du-Lac, Quebec.

The Eastern Townships offer nature, a lot of wine, and a forest full of twinkling fairies. Plus it smells good.

MAGOG, Quebec — The drive from Boston to Montreal is a peculiar one. After being hypnotized for hours by the rolling hills of Vermont on I-89, a traveler sees that the scenery at the Canadian border suddenly goes flat. It's as if someone came along with a pin and deflated all those gorgeous mountains as soon as the highway became QC-133 North. The elevation of Vermont is replaced by fields of corn and the nondescript towns of southern Quebec that dot the highway. Even worse, you're still hours from Montreal.

After years of making this drive, I was skeptical when a friend started raving about a trip she took to an area of southern Quebec called the Eastern Townships. All I could envision were more cornfields, more feed stores, lots of silos, and a random strip club. But when Canada opened to fully vaccinated Americans on Aug. 9, after what felt like forever, I was sufficiently intrigued. I was also looking for any excuse to write a story about Canada (please don't mention that



CHRISTOPHER
MUTHER

part to my editor). So I headed north.

As someone who generally sees the champagne glass as half empty — because I'm cynical and also because I've been drinking the champagne — I was pleasantly shocked at what the Eastern Townships had to offer. It's the area in southeastern Quebec between the St. Lawrence lowlands and the US-Canadian border and is centered on the city of Sherbrooke. If you want to see everything, plan on driving (or biking) a fair amount. You can take this as a quickie detour trip on your way to Montreal or Quebec City, or stay a few days. I opted for three days to get a taste, and for me that taste was primarily locally made cheese.

TOWNSHIPS, Page N16



The sculpture park at Domaine des Côtes d'Ardoise winery in Dunham, Quebec.

What's new, Maritimes?

By Neece Regis
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Oh, Canada! How we've missed your vibrant cities, rugged landscapes, imaginative cuisine, and friendly citizens this past pandemic year, and are thrilled that your borders are once again open to US citizens.

Before packing bags to visit our northern neighbor, there are a few things we Americans should know about Canada's federal entry restrictions. For example, don't even think about crossing the border for a vacation without being fully vaccinated at least 14 days prior to entry with an accepted COVID-19 vaccine. You'll also need proof of a negative test administered within three days of travel. All visitors must fill out a detailed application on ArriveCAN (app or web portal), submitting travel information and proof of vaccination status before crossing.



NICK HAWKINS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

A view of the Bay of Fundy coast from the Fundy footpath.

In addition to the federal guidelines, each province within Canada has its own set of restrictions and requirements to protect its residents. As protocols vary by each province, here is what you need to know to enter each of the Maritime Provinces

of Atlantic Canada, as well as new offerings in each of these regions that offer temperate weather, warm coastal waters, fresh seafood, and wide-open outdoor spaces for adventures that are easily accessible from

MARITIMES, Page N16

Inside

ROAD TRIP
**APP HELPS YOU
RENT A LOCAL
CAMPER VAN**

GoCamp connects travelers with owners of rental vans out West.

N15

VIPLounge
**MEGAN HILTY
RAISES MONEY
'FOR GOOD'**

We caught up with the Broadway star to talk about all things travel.

N14

How one traveler spent her COVID summer

By Beth Jones
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

In 2019, Boston's Logan Airport hit an all-time record of 42,522,411 passengers flying in and out, from near and far. But it was a short-lived celebration of wanderlust and carbon footprints. When the world's travelers were grounded in 2020 by COVID-19, travel through Logan dropped by more than 70 percent.

But as summer 2021 heated up and vaccine protocols were completed (or ignored), travelers dusted off luggage, and began to buckle up again in airplanes and cars. Backpacks with panniers slung on bicycles, as Americans threw their doors open and sped for departure terminals, campgrounds, and backroads. During

SUMMER, Page N15



ADOBE

Discovering some of Quebec's best-kept secrets

►TOWNSHIPS

Continued from Page N13

Day one: I arrived mid-afternoon on a Monday and decided I should unwind from the arduous trip with a few stops along the region's wine trail. You may roll your eyes at the idea of a wine trail in a geographically small area of Quebec, but there are 21 wineries here. Even on a Monday afternoon, outdoor tables were bustling with thirsty groups of Francophone tourists. I didn't hear a lot of English being spoken, and that's been a challenge for wine makers here.

The border closing meant that wineries lost their large base of boozy US tourists. Locals have helped fill some of that void, but the employees I chatted with at wineries said it's not the same. Naturally I wanted to do my part to help the wineries. Knowing I couldn't hit all 21 wineries in an afternoon, I opted for two of the big ones. Domaine des Côtes d'Ardoise in Dunham has an excellent selection of white wines and rosé, plus some spectacular ice wine, but the bonus here is that there's a quirky sculpture park you can stroll through. Domaine des Côtes d'Ardoise was founded in 1980, making it the oldest winery on the route. Nearby, Vignoble de l'Orpailleur is a grander winery that looks as if it had been plucked out of Napa Valley and dropped in the Eastern Townships. It has a restaurant and guided vineyard tours.

The sleek store at Vignoble de l'Orpailleur sells something called "gray wine." With a name like that I was thinking I'd pick up on notes of dishwasher and despair that would perhaps pair well with sadness. But it's a sweet, light white wine that goes great with dessert.

In addition to a wine trail (the wine trail here is called la Route des vins de Brome-Missisquoi), the Eastern Townships also has a microbrewery circuit with 23 craft brewers and brewpubs. For dinner that night I had a burger at a brewpub called Auberge Sutton Brouère. Because I never developed a taste for the beer, I asked for "A beer that doesn't taste like beer" to go with my dinner. After sampling a few varieties provided by a very patient and friendly bar manager, I gave up and ordered a local wine.

One of the things I neglected to mention about this area is that you get a lot for your money. I stayed at a sophisticated little hotel in Sutton for not much more than \$100 a night. The hotel, le Pleasant Hôtel & Café, is also one of the best breakfast spots in town.

Day two: If my first day in the townships was all about indulgence, my second day was all about roughing it.



The gazebo at Dreamland Park in North Hatley, Quebec. Below: The Gorge Park in Coaticook is transformed at night into Foresta Lumina; a charcuterie plate with cheese at Fromagerie la Station in Compton.



There are four national parks in the area. I laced up my hiking boots early (about 10 a.m.) and went to Parc National du Mont-Orford. The national park offers trails for hiking, mountain biking, and snowshoeing. I spent a good part of the day on trails that suited my level of fitness, which is officially categorized as "nonexistent," and then went to the park's beach, where you can rent boats, or simply swim.

After the park I drove about 20 minutes south to the monastery at Saint-Benoît-du-Lac Abbey, an imposing building perched along Lake Memphremagog. The grand abbey was completed in 1941, and it's still a working monastery. When I say working, I mean these monks really work. I quickly realized the true attraction here — in addition to the setting and building — is the

boutique and market. The 30 or so monks make 12 varieties of cheese. There are also orchards where they pick ingredients for fruit spreads. The market sells a lot of Saint-Benoît-du-Lac Abbey-branded food and wine. It's like the Trader Joe's of monasteries. People adore their religious cheeses.

Along a small highway in Magog, about 10 minutes from the abbey, there's a 100-year-old barn which has been converted into a perfumery. Truth be told I wasn't expecting anything too posh. Perhaps some dried herbs hanging from the rafters and a few bottles of lavender-scented-something in frou-frou packaging. Instead, I found Alexandra Bachand, who describes herself as a perfumer and "artist in olfactory art." Normally I would shrug my shoulders at the phrase "artist in olfactory

PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER MUTHER/GLOBE STAFF



art," but Bachand's work has actually been used in museum exhibitions. She generally works on about one or two scents per year, and the offerings at La Grange du Parfumeur are sublime fragrances that spring from her imagination.

When I arrived, I was seated in an outdoor garden and Bachand's husband, filmmaker Eric Delbaere, brought over a small plank with neatly arranged fragrance strips. Like a wine tasting, he instructed me to sniff from left to right, occasionally stopping and smelling my own hand as a fragrance palate cleanser for my nose. Although my hand still smelled of lake water and religious cheese, I did as instructed. It was the first time I thought about scent beyond getting spritzed while walking through a department store.

The approach to dinner was also unique. In Sherbrooke, about 30 minutes north of the perfumery, I tried Antidote FoodLab. The dishes on the menu appeared to be straightforward enough, but the green gazpacho featured sweet peas, trout mousse, Lebanese cucumber, and confit garlic. The bison shoulder fillet was finished with a roasted pistachio crust. I'm not listing all the ingredients, because it would take another 1,000 words or so, but you get the idea. They take food very seriously in Quebec.

I started the day in nature, and I finished it in nature. Although this nature was more supernatural. At night, Gorge Park in Coaticook is transformed into something called Foresta Lumina. Much like the perfumery, I wasn't expecting much before I arrived. A nature path with some fancy lights perhaps? But the 1½-mile trail was created by a company called Moment Factory, which has worked with artists such as Madonna, Justin Timberlake, Jay-Z, and Red Hot Chili Peppers. There are 11 main displays along the hike that are filled with visual trickery. The hike is not difficult, but it's not accessible for disabled folks, and it may be difficult for some because the path is uneven and not particularly well-lit in places. On the plus side, you get to speak into a microphone and make a wish to fairies before you head out. I hate to say it was magical and enchanted, but what the haystack, I'll call it magical and enchanted. I'd never experienced anything like it.

Day three: I still had a long list of places left to visit on my final day, but I have priorities, and those priorities involved eating more cheese. Did I mention there's a cheesemaker's circuit? The monks don't have a monopoly. Before I drove off to poke around some of the small towns, I headed to one of the most famous stops on the cheese circuit. Fromagerie la Station in Compton is a family farm situated on hundreds of acres with cows that supply milk for its cheeses. I was going to try its most celebrated cheese, called Alfred le Fermier, but I didn't want to play favorites, so I ordered the sampler.

The charcuterie plate at Fromagerie la Station was not unlike the communities of the Eastern Townships (warning: Hokey cheese analogy ahead). Each had its own flavor or texture, but they all complemented each other beautifully. I finished the cheese, however I'll need to finish visiting the Eastern Townships next summer.

Christopher Muther can be reached at christopher.muther@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter @Chris_Muther.

Easy access to Canadian provinces

►MARITIMES

Continued from Page N13

the Northeast.

New Brunswick

Travel protocols

New Brunswick welcomes American travelers who have received the full series of a COVID-19 vaccine that is accepted by the Government of Canada. Registration prior to travel into New Brunswick is no longer required.

What's new?

Hugging the southern coast of New Brunswick, visitors for years have enjoyed the Fundy Trail Parkway, a 6,323-acre park and 19-mile parkway carved out of one of the last remaining coastal wilderness areas between Florida and Newfoundland and Labrador. This year, the final connector to Alma is scheduled to be finished in mid-September, which will complete the construction of this hiking, biking, and driving route along coastal cliffs, river estuaries, waterfalls, and pristine beaches. Don't miss the opportunity to cross a 275-foot suspension bridge at Big Salmon River. fundytrail-parkway.com

Grain spirits, vodka, gin, absinthe, beer, and more are offered at The Fils du Roy Distillery. With the opening of an on-site malt house this year, it is now the first Canadian distillery to malt its own cereals. Located on the Acadian Peninsula, the distillery taps barley exclusively from local growers with plans to develop its own 700 acres to grow high quality barley. In the meantime, distillery tours are available to all. distilleriesfilsduroy.com/en/new-brunswick

Newfoundland & Labrador

Travel protocols

Visitors are required to submit a travel form within 30 days of their expected travel date and follow public health guidelines during their stay. Ful-



TOURISM PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



PATRICK ROJO

The five-star Muir Halifax hotel recently debuted on the Halifax Waterfront. Top: The new Island Walk loops around Prince Edward Island.

ly vaccinated travelers are not required to self-isolate or be tested for COVID-19 upon their arrival to the province unless they are required by federal protocols. www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/travel/travel-restrictions/

What's new?

Located on the Newfoundland's eastern Bonavista Peninsula, the Discovery UNESCO Global Geopark offers 10 developed geosites that showcase the re-

gion's diverse geological, natural, and cultural landscape. Visitors can discover 600 million-year-old fossils, spectacular rock formations, traditional root cellar farming, and learn about geopark conservation and history. discovery-geopark.com

In western Newfoundland, the boutique Hew & Draw Hotel has revitalized a century-old building in the town of Corner Brook with 36 individually designed stylish suites, rooftop patio, on-

site craft brewery and restaurant. www.hewanddraw.ca

From the property, it's a 90-minute drive to the soaring fjords, beaches, and bogs of Gros Morne National Park, where the soon-to-open Gros Morne Inn offers stunning views of the surrounding landscape. www.grosmorneinn.com

Prince Edward Island

Travel protocols

American travelers fully vaccinated with Canadian-authorized COVID-19 vaccines are also eligible to apply for a PEI Pass to verify that they are fully vaccinated, and can visit PEI without isolating. US travelers will be tested upon entry to PEI. www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/travel

What's new?

Lace up your hiking shoes and set off on the newly launched Island Walk, a 435-mile walking trail that loops around the island. Allow approximately 32 days to complete this trail that takes you along the ocean, much of the Confederation Trail, red dirt roads, beaches, and through quiet secondary roads on the outer perimeter of the Island, with a mix of inland and coastal sections. The trail is not technically difficult, and intertwines through PEI's two major cities, Charlottetown and Summerside, and many small communities. Want a shorter route? The walk is conveniently divided into 32 sections so that you can plan a shorter sojourn. www.tourismpei.com/the-island-walk

Four-season glamping yurts are set to debut at the Nature Space Resort and Retreat Center, an outdoors-focused property set on St. Peter's Lake in Morell. A two-night package — for four to six people — includes accommodations in the kingfisher yurt and eagles nest loft, two yoga classes, felting workshop, and breakfast of farm fresh eggs, homemade bread, local bacon, and more. (\$159-\$199 per person.) Additional experiences include kayaking to an oyster farm (includes learning to shuck!), kayak brewery tour (fittingly called Paddles and Pints), kayak and yoga (kayoga), nature tours via kayak or SUP, mindfulness meditation workshops, and private yoga classes. naturespaceyoga.com/nature-space-eco-resort/

Nova Scotia

Travel protocols

Fully vaccinated American visitors who qualify for entry into Canada must also apply for entry into Nova Scotia by completing the Nova Scotia Safe Check-in Form for each adult traveler age 18 or older. Visitors need to follow public health guidelines while in Nova Scotia, including wearing a non-medical mask in most indoor public places. novascotia.ca/coronavirus/travel/

What's new?

Those who wish to be pampered may want to check out the Muir Halifax, a Marriott Autograph Collection five-star hotel that recently debuted on the Halifax Waterfront. The property features spacious rooms and suites with expansive harbor views, chef-driven dining options with waterfront seating, custom-designed speakeasy, guest-only art gallery, cold plunge and hydrotherapy pools, salt room, and even private yacht access. muirhotel.com

On the western coast of the province in the Annapolis Valley — in the heart of the island's wine region — you'll find the newly opened Inn at the Winery at Grand Pre. After a wine tasting and tour of this family winery, stay for the night in the owners' renovated farmhouse. (Open May through December.) grandprewines.com

Returning to the US

All air passengers 2 years of age and over entering the United States (including US citizens and legal permanent residents) are required to present a negative COVID-19 test, taken within three calendar days of departure or proof of recovery from the virus within the last 90 days. Airlines must confirm this, and deny boarding of passengers who do not provide documentation of a negative test or recovery. This does not apply to border crossings. Reentry for American citizens and lawful permanent residents traveling by car into the United States is considered essential travel and is not restricted.

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-international-air-travelers.html

Necce Regis can be reached at necceeregis@gmail.com.