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Nova Scotia Travel: Travel Editor Jim Byers' six things to do in Lunenburg

From historic ships to cutting edge restaurants and a homegrown distillery, this Nova Scotia town is a perfect Maritimes destination.



NOVA SCOTIA TOURISM

Lunenburg's waterfront is one of the prettiest sights on the extensive shore of Nova Scotia. It's only about 100 km from Halifax, but it's better to take a couple days to explore this wonderful town.

By: **Jim Byers** Travel, Published on Wed Mar 20 2013

LUNENBURG, N.S.—This town is a UNESCO heritage site, with tons of well-preserved buildings but also a surprisingly hip vibe. Sure, there's the Bluenose II. But there's also truly great food to go along with history and cute shops. Here are some things to try.

More on Nova Scotia Travel

1. TAKE A TOUR

You can spend \$20 and get a [walking tour](#) with the affable and fun Shelah Allen.. She'll tell you about the colourful houses in towns, a relatively recent phenomenon. Some are Golden Gate Bridge orange; others deep fuschia, navy blue, cranberry red, and more. Many are lovely. Many are, um, interesting. Allen also might get you into the Anglican Church of St. John, with its stunning wood carvings and gorgeous light. Becky Herman is one of several guides on the [horse-drawn carriage tours](#), which you can catch on the waterfront and cost \$20 for 35 minutes (less for kids). My tour was too heavy on dates that various buildings were put up, but there were fun snippets about how stained glass in some homes was shipped

from Europe in barrels of molasses to keep it from breaking. You'll also learn about the widow's watch features in local homes, where Lunenburg's women would sit and gaze out at the harbour waiting for their husbands to return from the clutches of the sea.

2. HAVE A DRINK

Pierre Guevremont and Lynne MacKay opened the [Ironworks Distillery](#) in 2009 after they read a story on an airplane about a small distillery in B.C. They'll pour you a variety of their own products, including rum, a selection of fruit eaux de vie and a vodka made from Annapolis Valley apples. The cranberry liqueur is a mouthful of tart goodness, while the raspberry is surprisingly subtle. 2 Kempt St. at Montague.

3. LEARN YOUR FISH

The [Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic](#) is fun; with displays on the Bluenose and the area's history in the rum running biz, not to mention a series of tanks with salmon, cod and flounder for the kids to look at. There also are displays of the dangerous early days of cod fishing in local waters (occasionally men got left behind when they went out in small their small dory and were separated from the main ship). They also have a tidal tank out on the wharf where kids or those who wish they were kids can get up and close and personal with crabs, scallops and starfish. 68 Bluenose Dr. Open daily; hours vary. \$10 for adults. Closed for renovations until May 18.

4. POKE AROUND TOWN

[Laughing Whale](#) sells great coffee, and you also can buy nice sweets. The store basically is inside The Shop on the Corner, which sells lots of colourful kitchen goods and other, fun items. 263 Lincoln St. www.laughingwhalecoffee.com. Of course, there's no shortage of places to buy Bluenose t-shirts or boat-shaped serving bowls. Looking for a real boat of your own? Stop in at [Norseboat](#) and get Glen Cairns to show you the old-style boats they make for markets as far away as Florida, Ireland and Germany. "These aren't cranky little boats; they have classic looks and classic performance. You could say they're the Swiss army knife of small sailboats." 151 Montague.

5. FINE DINING

Fleur de Sel on Montague is a restored house with pale blue walls and an old fireplace in the middle of the main dining room. Romantic as hell. I had fabulous calamari that was flash fried and served with a trio of sauces, including a green olive tapenade. There also was rabbit pot au feu as an appetizer; rich and full of tender meat but somehow not as satisfying. The best part might have been the Basil Lemonade, with gin, pear eau de vie from Ironworks Distillery, fresh basil, honey and green peppercorn syrup, fresh lemon juice, ground pepper and sparkling water. It was served in a tall glass with a sprig of deep green basil, a wedge of brilliant yellow lemon and a bright orange straw, making it look as good as it tasted. 53 Montague. fleurdesel.net. The same folks who own it also run [Salt Shaker Deli](#) down the street. The linguini with scallops and bacon has a generous amount of fresh seafood with a huge portion of crispy bacon and lots of garlic, while the seafood chowder has smoked haddock and hardly a scrap of vegetable filler. It's said to have won several awards and it's easy to see—and taste – why. 124 Montague. [The Savvy Sailor](#) on Montague makes a good brie, pulled chicken and cranberry sandwich and features unusually

tasty bacon. They have a small deck overlooking the harbour. They make good breakfasts with unusually tasty bacon, too. 100 Montague.

Interactive Graphic: [Explore Nova Scotia](#)

6. ALSO RECOMMENDED

Down the road a few minutes is the community of Blue Rocks, which is impossibly quaint and has absolutely not one t-shirt shop or cute souvenir store selling lobster-shaped oven mitts; not that there's anything wrong with that. It's quiet and tailor-made for photography nuts. The Bluenose (you guessed that, didn't you?) [Golf Club](#) is across the bay. It looks fairly basic but has killer views of the town and it's only \$40 for 18 holes. The nearby town of Mahone Bay is lovely, with nicer views of the water than you'll find in Lunenburg. Try the [Tea Brewery](#) for a variety of teas or a chai latte, or check out their colourful kitchen gear. 503 Main St.

JUST THE FACTS

ARRIVING Lunenburg is just 100 km from Halifax, which is just a couple hours from Toronto via Air Canada, WestJet or Porter.

SLEEPING The [Lunenburg Arms Inn](#) has some great rooms. Mine had wood floors and an awesome view out over the water. There are a variety of rooms and suites, with standard rooms for summer weekends starting around \$149.

WEB SURFING www.lunenburgns.com , www.novascotia.com