

forty-eight hours in...

Harbour Breton

*Photos and story
by Doug Wells*





Nestled at the southern tip of the Connaigre Peninsula

on Newfoundland's south coast is Harbour Breton, the charming community where I live. To get here, travellers must exit the Trans-Canada Highway near Bishop's Falls, in central Newfoundland, onto Route 360. The southern portion of Route 360 is called the Coast of Bays – an area where travellers should be on the lookout for wildlife and breathtaking landscapes. Visitors say the scenery gets better with every kilometre, so have your camera ready!





The Sunny Cottage Heritage Centre was originally built in 1910 as the family home of John Joe Rose, a local merchant.

Harbour Breton is one of the oldest communities on the Connaigre Peninsula and its 300 years of settlement are anchored in the fishery – from the early years as a French fishing base, to the days of the Newman & Company traders, to the schooner fishery and modern deep-sea trawler fishing. In spite of its downturn in the past few years, the fishery is still the mainstay of the town's economy, and new ventures in aquaculture look promising for the future here.

Approximately 2,000 people live in Harbour Breton, which is one of the largest settlements on the south coast and a service centre for the region. It is a proud and progressive town with a strong sense of history and culture, and tremendous community spirit. A new hospital, hotel, personal care home, boardwalks and trails, RV campground, interpretative panels and the Elliott Premises are among the town's amenities.

Harbour Breton is at the mouth of Harbour Breton Bay – a magnificent fiord with vertical granite cliffs, coves and inlets; bald eagles soar overhead and cottages dot the landscape.

The harbour is ice-free and sheltered by towering cliffs, making it naturally attractive to boaters. In recent years the harbour has been visited by the fishing schooner *Sherman Zwicker* (a letter from its owner was published in the March 2008 issue of *Downhome*); the replica of Cabot's ship, the *Matthew*; the Norse replica ship, the *Islandinger*; and the *Bluenose II*.

Visitors should know...

When visiting Harbour Breton, make sure you stop by the Sunny Cottage Heritage Centre and the Elliott Premises to learn about the town's rich and colourful history. Sunny Cottage is an old Queen Anne-style structure built by a local





merchant, John Joe Rose, in 1910. See the beautiful architecture of this home, tour the Resettlement Room, learn about the Rose and Stewart families, and experience the rooftop widow's walk. Take time to chat with the friendly staff and, you never know, you might get to taste a touton.

The Elliott Premises is a new tourist attraction in town. It has a performance theatre and an interpretation area. Here the story is told of the Newman & Company in Harbour Breton

The waterfront at Harbour Breton accommodates vessels of all types, from working fishing ships to yachts and sailboats.

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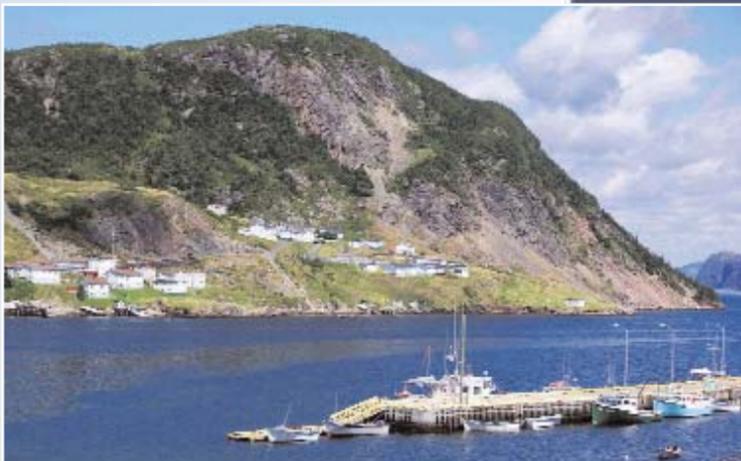
The shoreline of Thompson's Beach leads to Rocky Point Lighthouse, the only lighthouse in the entire Coast of Bays.

and the era of the Bank fishery. Floating docks allow transient yachts and local boats to tie up by this beautiful facility.

Deadman's Cove is a must-see for visitors. Located just 1 km from Harbour Breton, it is accessible by vehicle or by walking trails and boardwalks from the highway at Mile Pond. Four adjoining, beautiful sandy beaches were formed here as a result of glacial deposition. Walk the fine, reddish sand and tease the waves. In season, you can watch capelin roll on the beaches and whales feed near shore. From Deadman's Cove, you can see the whole entrance to Fortune Bay, the nearby islands of Sagona and Brunette, part of the Burin Peninsula, as well as the French island of Miquelon.

If you feel up to it, take a hike to Gun Hill, which was used for hundreds of years as a lookout for vessels coming from England and, in more recent years, to watch for fishing schooners coming from the Grand Banks. Today, a combination of boardwalks, trails and steps leads the way to the Gun Hill Lookout. Hundreds of feet above the town, it offers a breathtaking view that will forever be etched in your memory. You can see clearly the whole shape of the protected harbour and the clusters of homes on the North Side, South Side and the Arm area of Harbour Breton. You can even see beyond town to the mighty Harbour Breton Bay Fiord. Make sure your camera is with you on this trip.

On Harbour Breton's South Side, a short walking trail ends at Rocky Point Lighthouse. A leisurely stroll by the cemetery route or by the Thompson's Beach route will lead you to the only lighthouse in the Coast of Bays. In operation since 1873, it continues to guide ships safely past the rocky shore. From Rocky Point you have a view of the fiord and the resettled community of Jersey Harbour across the water. Look closely



and you can spot the wreck of an old side-trawler, and the cemetery, in this abandoned community.

Other attractions in Harbour Breton include the Mile Pond Boardwalk, the Harbour Breton War Memorial, old cemeteries and the Barasway Beach. Every summer, people turn out to enjoy the Red Head Rocks Festival, and this year there's an extra reason to celebrate. Harbour Breton is marking its 50th anniversary as an incorporated town by hosting a Come Home Year party from July 25 to August 2.

The locals say...

Angie Tibbo, Harbour Breton's postmaster, was born and raised in this south coast town. She considers herself privileged to call Harbour Breton home.

"My work brings me in contact with the most valued reason for treasuring Harbour Breton – its people. The people comprise the social fabric of our community, a social fabric

Gun Hill towers hundreds of feet over the harbour. The lookout atop Gun Hill offers an incredible overview of Harbour Breton and the fiord beyond.

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Deadman's Cove is a natural wonder and a popular strolling spot, with its four adjoining beaches of fine reddish sand.

that holds such magnetism; I always look forward to returning home from my travels," she says, adding, "Harbour Breton is blessed with such rugged, pristine scenery; it reminds me of living in a national park."

That park-like setting also appeals to Bernetta Delaney, the vice-principal at King Academy. She says, "As a person who loves the outdoors and believes in fitness as a way of life, I would have to say that Harbour Breton offers one of the most spectacular jogging and walking routes I have ever seen. A newly constructed boardwalk about 5 km in distance hugs the banks of the four beautiful beaches found at Deadman's Cove. The sound of the waves and the seagulls along the trail are like music to the ears. The scenery itself can only be described as awesome and breathtaking. It's a well-travelled boardwalk with lots of friendly faces."

Mayor Donald Stewart believes his town has a bright future because of all it has to offer visitors and residents alike. "We have the history, we have the scenery, and we have growing tourism infrastructure that will put Harbour Breton on the map as a definite tourist destination in the future," he says, then adds, "I was born and raised here; I wouldn't want to live anywhere else."

From headlands to inland, this area of Newfoundland is nothing short of spectacular. Come visit the "Old Capital of Fortune Bay," learn about Harbour Breton, take part in the events and be welcomed by the exceptional hospitality. Described by tourists as the "Gros Morne of the South Coast," you have to see it for yourself! 📧