

# My **N**ew **B**runswick

## GRAND MANAN *Island*



*Grand Manan's famous Swallowtail lighthouse.*

*Story and photos by Larry Dickinson and Steve Rogers*

On a small island in the Bay of Fundy lies a mystical place called Grand Manan. It is a place of legends and lore, and it's only a 90-minute ferry ride from the mainland.

The island is very peaceful and relaxing, with its stunning scenery and natural resources. It has become a laid-back paradise for kayakers, hikers and bird-watchers. The salt air and summer sun seems to make everyday problems disappear.

The island's rocky, cliff-lined coast, glacial deposits, and magnetic sand makes Grand Manan a unique place to visit. From sunrise to sunset, the island keeps calling you back, year after year.

When you arrive on the ferry, you pass the iconic Swallowtail Lighthouse that stands guard over the island and has done so for 160 years. It is one of New Brunswick's most photographed lighthouses and even appears on a Canadian stamp.

Grand Manan is on the eastern flyway for migratory birds. More than 400 species have been counted on the island. Every September, bird watchers travel to the island and head to the marshes to see hundreds of bird species.

Puffins are a must-see during your visit. They make their home on Machias Seal Island, which is just a short boat ride off the main island. There are tours available to take you there. You can also take a whale

watching or sunset cruise.

Beaches on Grand Manan come in all sizes and shapes. The texture of the beaches also changes. Many seem to endlessly stretch along the bays, coves and harbours of the island. Seal Cove, Deep Harbour, and the Anchorage are popular with locals and visitors alike. You can spend a relaxing afternoon lying on the sand in the warm sun and listening to the waves. Or find treasures such as beach glass, pottery shards, driftwood, shells and sand dollars along the shoreline. You can even get a map showing you which beaches are best for finding sea glass.

The island has many hiking trails that range from beginner to expert. The trails



*Hole-in-the-Wall rock formation.*

often wind along the cliff-tops of the coast – a photographers dream. A short drive to the end of the island, you reach Southern Head. You can walk along trails at the top of high cliffs with the bay below. Relax on the bench atop the cliff and watch for whales, seals or porpoises in the water below.

The Bay of Fundy is a haven for a variety of whales, seals and seabirds. Attracted by schools of fish and zooplankton, they find a natural habitat for nursing their young, courtship, mating and nesting. Harbour porpoises around Grand Manan join finback, humpback, minke, and the rare North Atlantic right whales. Whale watching tours are available to take you where you can be up close and personal with these beautiful mammals. Be sure to bring your camera.

Kayaking is a popular and fun way to see Grand Manan. You can rent a kayak and paddle to the famous Hole-in-the-Wall rock formation. If the tide is in, you can paddle right through it. If you're new to the sport, qualified guides will teach you the basic strokes.

The Grand Manan Museum should be on your sightseeing list. You can tour the Allen Moses Memorial Bird Collection, a shipwrecks gallery, a horse-drawn hearse, a one-room schoolhouse and many interesting and fun displays. The museum is even dog friendly!

The Grand Manan Whale and Seabird Research Station is a great little museum whose displays include whales, seals, seabirds, fish, sharks, and invertebrates. You'll also find information on how whales survive in the oceans, with some hands-on displays for busy, little hands.



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You can't visit Grand Manan without trying their famous dulse. This red seaweed is harvested in Dark Harbour. It has a unique taste loved by many.

End your days on the island with the most beautiful sunsets you'll ever experience. At Southern Head, you can watch the sun sink slowly behind the shining bay water, with Maine's coast just a few kilometres in the distance. The Whistle is another popular spot for sunsets. There, you might even see a whale, porpoise or a sunset cruise boat

passing in the waters below.

There are many places to stay when you visit Grand Manan, from heritage houses to bed and breakfasts. Accommodations fill quickly, so book your island adventure well in advance.

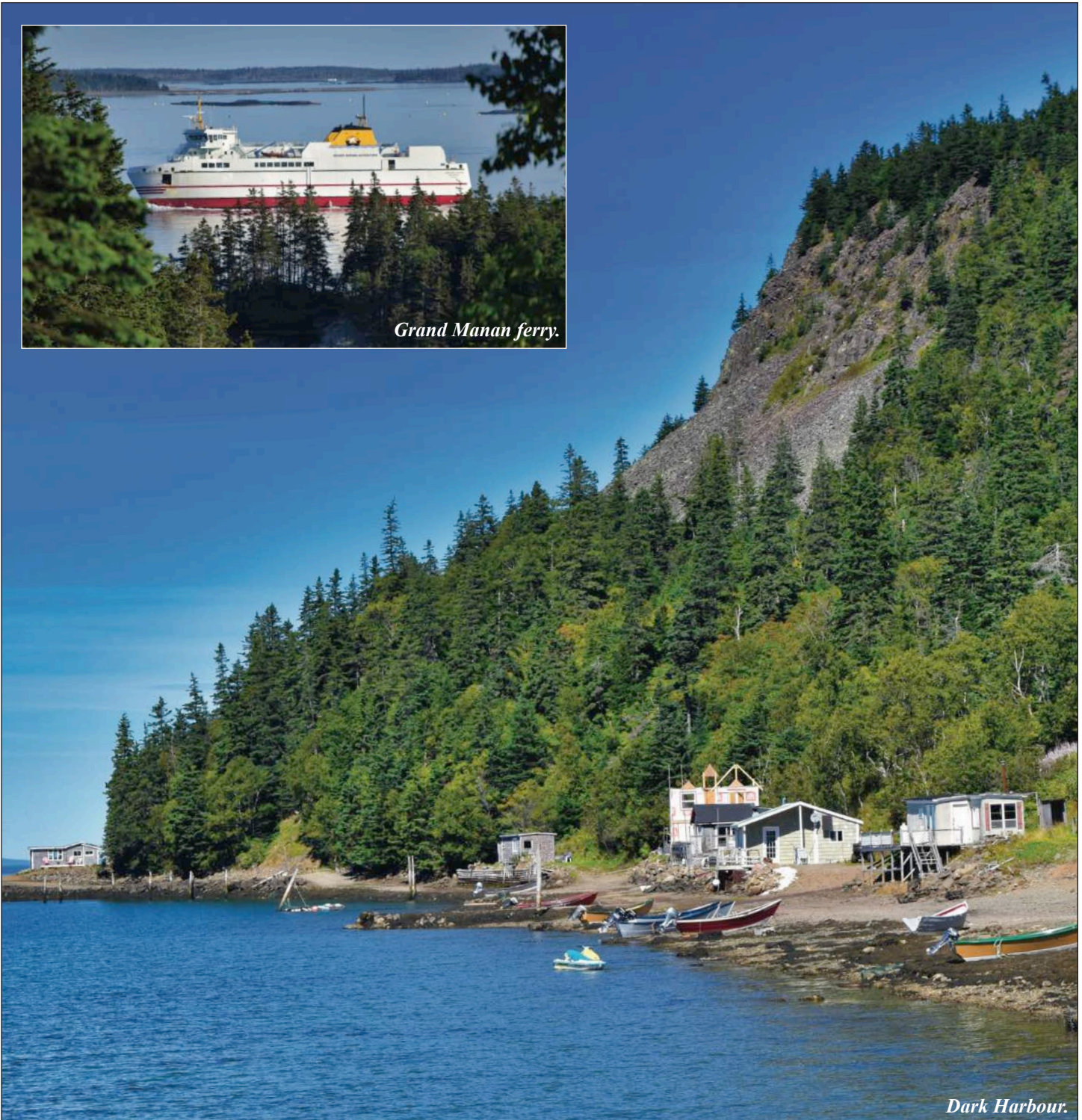
Grand Manan is an island paradise with friendly people and lots to see and do. It's a place that once you visit, you'll fall in love with and want to return. Slow down, relax, forget your troubles for a while and watch the world pass by.



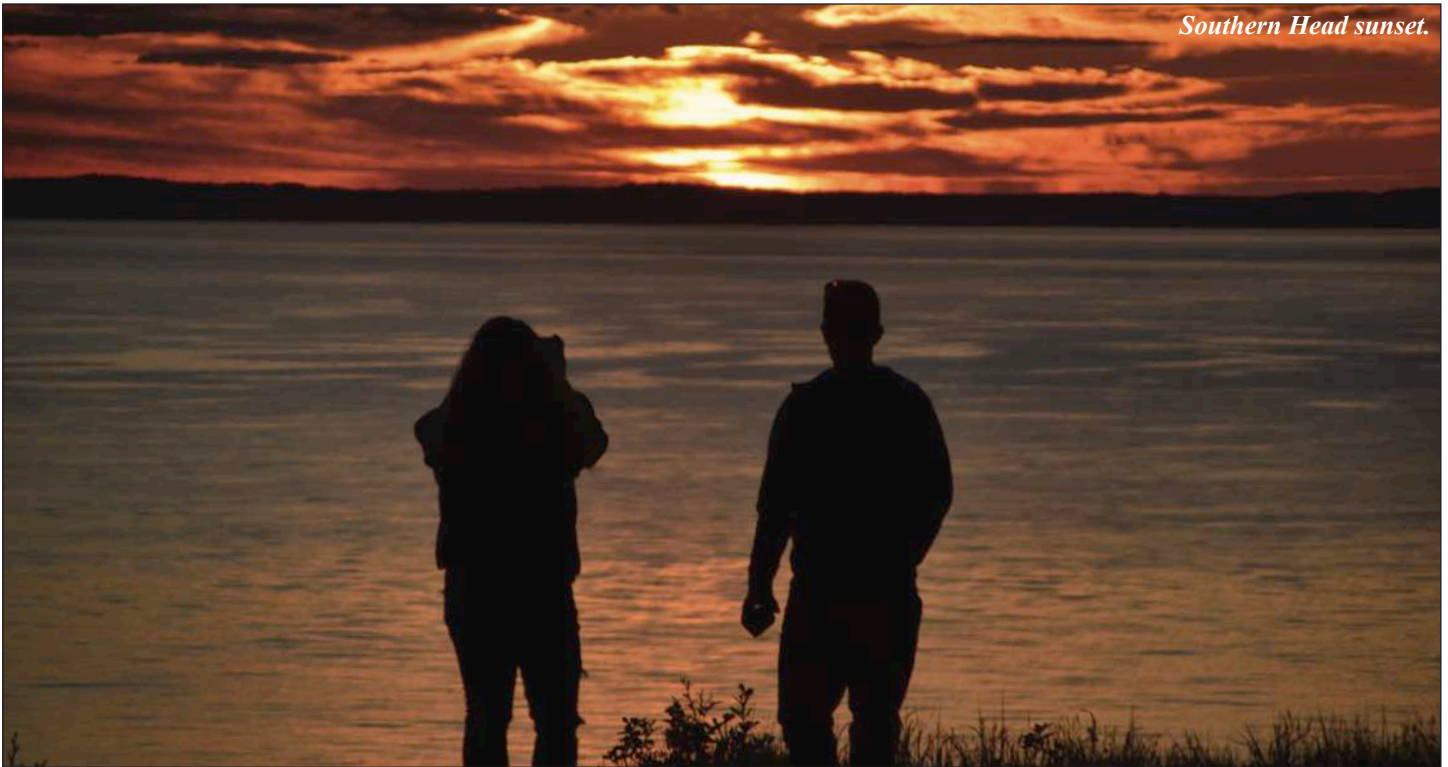
*Larry Dickinson and Steve Rogers are retired avid photographers who travel New Brunswick taking pictures. The couple has documented their adventures and shared the sights and history of communities on their popular website [MyNewBrunswick.ca](http://MyNewBrunswick.ca).*



*Grand Manan ferry.*



*Dark Harbour.*



## Grand Manan Island History

Portuguese explorer João Álvares Fagundes charted the area around 1520, but the island does not appear clearly on a map until 1558, produced by Portuguese cartographer Diogo Homem. French merchant-explorer Étienne Bellenger visited the area in January 1583.

In 1693, the island was granted to Paul D'Ailleboust, Sieur de Périgny, as part of Champlain's "New France." D'Ailleboust did not take possession of it, and it reverted to the French Crown, in whose possession it remained until 1713 when it was traded to the British in the Treaty of Utrecht.

The first permanent settlement was established in 1784, when Moses Gerrish gathered a group of settlers on Grand Manan he called Ross Island, in honour of settler Thomas Ross. During the American Revolution, just off the island, there were many naval battles between American privateers and British shipping.

Because of the Treaty of Paris (1783), the U.S. considered Grand Manan to be its possession due to the island's proximity to Maine. Britain obtained title in Jay's Treaty of 1794 while surrendering its sovereignty claims over Eastport on Moose, Frederick and Dudley islands in nearby Cobscook Bay.

Seal Cove, a Canadian National Historic Site, is relatively unchanged since the late

19th century. From 1812 to 1814, the Bay of Fundy was infested with privateers who raided and plundered villages. The islands' ownership in Passamaquoddy Bay was not settled until 1817, when the United States gave up its claim to Grand Manan and the surrounding islands.

By 1832, schools were established by the Anglican Church. While neighbouring islands along the American coast to Boston relied on whaling, Grand Manan had fishing and shipbuilding.

In 1831, the Gannet Rock Lighthouse was built on a rocky islet south of Grand Manan to protect shipping en route to Saint John, New Brunswick. It is Grand Manan's oldest lighthouse.

By 1851, the island population numbered almost 1,200 permanent inhabitants, most working in fishing.

By 1884, Grand Manan became the

largest supplier of smoked herring in the world. By 1920, it produced one million boxes—or twenty thousand tons—of smoked herring, all caught in its local waters.

By the late Victorian era, Grand Manan had been discovered by a new breed of explorers—the "tourists." They began visiting the island in steady numbers, weaving themselves into the fabric of its close-knit, isolated society. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Willa Cather loved the island's unspoiled solitude.

Simultaneously, painters such as Alfred Thompson Bricher and John James Audubon came to Grand Manan and its outlying islands to capture what they believed to be its "unique majesty," documenting its varied geography and Indigenous fauna. (Source: Wikipedia)

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