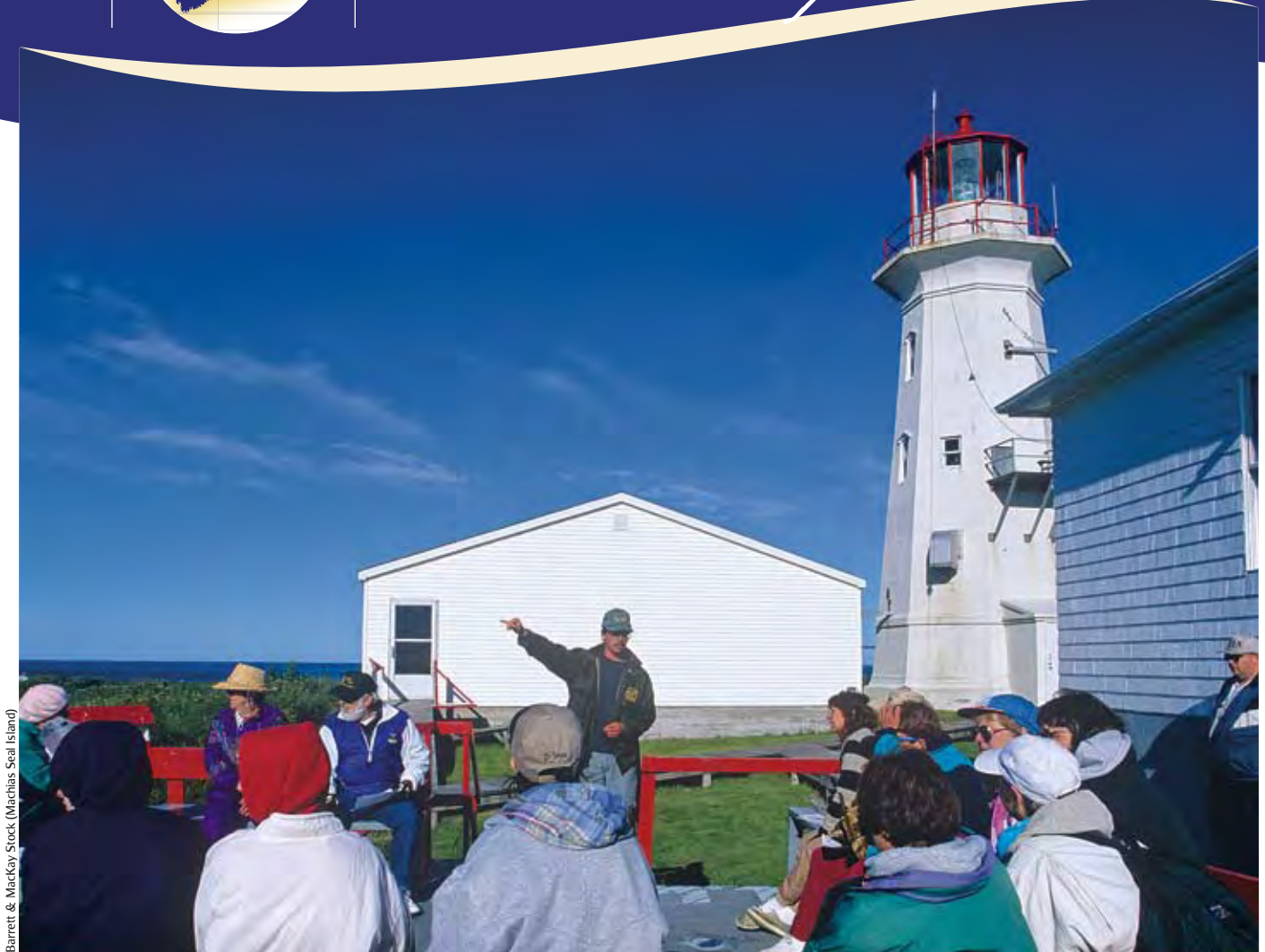




Authentic experiences



Barrett & MacKay Stock (Machias Seal Island)

Always wanted to...

Don't put it off any longer—indulge your interests this summer by taking a learning vacation

by Sandra Phinney

No wonder more and more of us are choosing to turn our summer holidays into learning vacations. What better way to learn about our world than to completely immerse ourselves in something that fascinates us, whether it be history, nature, culture, sport or art? But the experience has to be authentic. And that's what many hands-on organizations in Atlantic Canada have to offer—real experiences that will renew our capacity for wonder. Experiences that will allow us to learn something new, hone a skill, or quadruple our knowledge in a certain area. Oh yeah—and have an incredible time in the process.

For starters, how would you like to be part of a select group of people allowed on Machias Seal Island off the coast of New Brunswick, sitting in a photo blind surrounded by hundreds of puffins? Later, you'd board a 50-foot sailboat and find yourself

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The Whale Camp

The Whale Camp in Grand Manan, NB teaches participants skills like banding shore birds and researching whale songs.

communing eyeball to eyeball with a whale. The next day, while on a converted lobster fishing vessel, you'd observe marine mammals and test water samples to learn about the conditions that lead to productive food webs. Welcome to The Whale Camp in Grand Manan, NB (whalecamp.com).

Owner/director Dennis Bowman says participants can't help but view the world differently after spending a week at The Whale Camp. Other daily activities include things like dissecting a shark, banding a shore bird and doing whale song research. You'll come home at night to a cosy cottage. Bonus: amazing meals featuring seafood and organic produce are part of the package. Aside from the daily hands-on field experiences, each evening there are seminars presented by experts on a variety of

topics, such as the sustainable use of marine and land-based resources.

Moving inland to a "living museum," the Village Historique Acadien in Caraquet, NB offers some unique day programs for adults later in the season (villagehistoriqueacadien.com). It's a great way to get acquainted with traditional crafts. After getting into period costume and listening to a short historical briefing, off you go to one of the historical buildings for a workshop. These can range from making wooden water barrels to a set of fireplace tools at the blacksmith's, or taking part in the process of making linen from flax and cooking traditional foods. (By the way, you get to take home what you make!) It's all about getting a sense of time and place. American visitors Allen and Cathy Deyo loved their visit so much they kept coming back



Photocanada

Le Village Historique Acadien in Caraquet, NB offers workshops ranging from making wooden water barrels to making linen from flax.



Travel itself is part of some longer continuity. Through travel I first became aware of the outside world; it was through travel that I found my own introspective way into becoming part of it.

– Eudora Welty



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H. Moses, Parks Canada Agency, 21671E

Students of the excavation program at the Louisbourg National Historic Site of Canada screen dirt for artifacts.

for more. “Thanks so much for sharing your village,” they later wrote. “We had one of the best summer vacations ever because of the Acadien Historical Village.” [sic]

If archaeology holds a certain fascination for you, head to Cape Breton and the Louisbourg National Historic Site of Canada (fortressoflouisbourg.ca/archaeologyE). Here you can sign up to do some excavation work in August. Although the fortress was demolished and abandoned in the 1760s, the remnants have survived in a remarkable state of preservation. About 25 per cent of the site has been restored. It’s the largest reconstruction project in North America.

The current excavation site is located at the De la Vallière property. This section of Louisbourg was continuously occupied from 1720 to 1768. But it’s not only about “the dig.” Part of the program includes artifact research, comparative site studies, visits to the conservation lab, costume departments and more. Aside from the learning and discovery, you’ll want to take part in the Louisbourg Mystery tour and 18th century wine-tasting at the fortress.

For a vacation that leans more to the arts and crafts, why not sign up for a vacation

at the Spinner’s Loft in West Jeddore (thespinnersloft.ca)? Leslie Hauck runs this amazing spot, located about an hour from Halifax. She’s been spinning for 25 years, using everything from llama, pony and dog hair to milkweed pod silk. She has a passion for working with colour, spinning and creating yarns—and loves to teach others the pleasure of the craft. Leslie organizes spinning workshops that range from one to five days. It doesn’t matter if you’re a beginner or seasoned spinner.

“The studio environment is amazing!” says Sandra Brownlee, an accomplished weaver who spent some time at the Spinner’s Loft. “Anyone who wishes to treat themselves to a creative, restful, and healthy holiday will love the experience here. For tourists taking a workshop, staying overnight will make their Nova Scotian experience rich, intimate and inspiring.”

Two more things you should know: it’s easy to get a shuttle van from the airport—and Leslie’s a wicked good cook!

If you have a flair for theatre, The Prince Edward Island Conservatory offers top notch workshops in playwriting, directing and acting for amateur and professional

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performing artist (peiconservatory.com). Workshop leaders are internationally renowned and involved in the world's leading venues and arts organizations. To wit: Boko Suzuki, music director of *Rent* on Broadway; Louise Pitre of *Mamma Mia* fame; Lynne Cormack, currently the film teacher at National Theatre School Canada; and Duncan McIntosh, former director of the Shaw Festival and Charlottetown Festival—to name a few.

Classes are held in lovely 19th century churches and community halls in this vibrant fishing village, founded in 1753. Classes are also held on the beach and in nearby meadows. Lunch includes bike rides to the wharf to savour what the local fishermen have landed. Evenings usually consist of long intensive discussions about art and life, replete with a glass of white wine, a feed of famous PEI mussels and oysters and picture-perfect sunsets.

If you'd like to get off the treadmill and explore the benefits of a different lifestyle, Pioneer Farm is the perfect place to hunker down for a few days (pioneerfarm.ca). Located in Glenwood, PEI, Judy and Jim Bertling have 150 acres of fields, forest, meadow and ocean. Pioneer Farm is a living exhibition, replete with scores of farm

Voice coach Julia Lenardon (3rd from right) with students taking part in The Prince Edward Island Conservatory workshops. Below: Enjoying the outdoors at lunchtime—just part of the program. Page 41: At Pioneer Farm in Glenwood, PEI, participants learn about animal husbandry and farm life.



Robyne Baruchel

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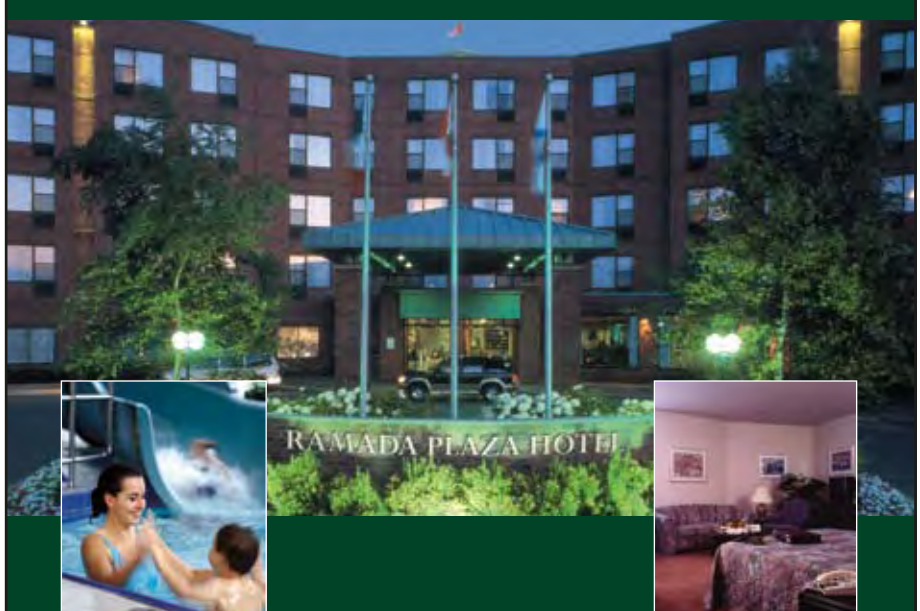
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Pioneer Farm

Learning vacations are “in.”

The hardest thing, of course, is deciding what to do and where to go—but how wonderful to be so spoiled for choice!

animals (including some very curious llamas) and a certified organic garden. Although you'll get a taste for the way farms operated in bygone days, there's a neat twist: Pioneer Farm uses modern technology—solar and wind generated power systems. It's all about conservation, respecting the environment and the creatures that inhabit it.

During your stay here, you'll have your own cottage and you can become as active as you want on the farm. You can also take long nature hikes, canoe the inlet, or get up close and personal with the llamas and



Pioneer Farm

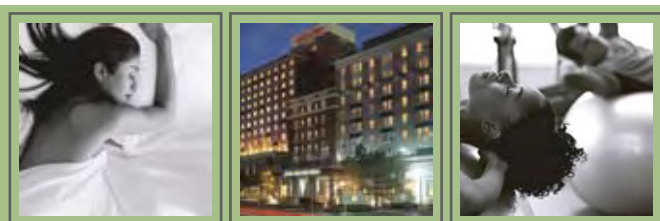
Pioneer Farm is a great place to experience a different lifestyle. Participants are encouraged to get as involved as they want in daily farm activities, like caring for llamas or working in the organic garden, during their stay.

other farm animals. For many people, the major benefit of experiencing this alternate lifestyle is discovering that “less is more.” It’s an amazing journey.

Do you have a hankering for tripping the light fantastic? Does your heart skip a

beat when you watch Riverdance or Lord of the Dance? If so, don your dancing shoes and sign up for Shawn Silver’s dance classes in St. John’s. He runs a program called “Get in touch with your inner Celt” at iDance, the province’s premier Irish

dance centre (idance.ca). It includes an Irish Dance Program for tourists—a huge hit. You’ll learn the basic elements of traditional Irish dancing and lots about this fascinating aspect of Newfoundland and Labrador culture.



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Terry Rice Photography

The “Get in touch with your inner Celt” program promises fun and excitement at St. John’s Irish dance centre, iDance, where students learn the basic elements of traditional Irish dance. Below: Instructor Shawn Silver demonstrates for a class.



Terry Rice Photography

“Classes are fun, energetic, and visitors are invited to perform their new skills at one of our regular ceildhs that we hold throughout the city’s Irish pubs,” says Shawn. “There is no pressure to perform—however once your toes start tapping, you’re bound to hit the dance floor!

If you’ve ever been tempted to take a kayaking vacation but weren’t sure if you could handle it, here’s a chance to develop your skills in an incredible setting. It’s an eight-day program called “Explore & Train,” given by the folks at Explore Newfoundland (with headquarters just outside Corner Brook). You’ll start off learning the basics in placid waters and then graduate to longer

and more exotic excursions. Before you know it, you’ll be paddling around islands and icebergs and possibly even dipping your paddle next to whales and dolphins. You’ll also visit outports, take a float plane to a remote island, stay in some unique lodgings and feast like royalty. But most importantly, by your eighth day you should know a thing or two about kayaks and be able to manoeuvre one like a pro.

This company is Canada’s only Nordkapp Trust Centre—one of eight in the world—offering the best in equipment and guides, as well as a unique kayaking experience. And if you’re into wilderness camping, consider taking the four-day Wilderness & Remote

First Aid Course (explorenewfoundland.com). It includes not only the technical side of first aid, but the more important mental aspects and challenges peculiar to remote settings. Bonus: the course is recognized in 175 countries.

As you can see, learning vacations are “in.” The hardest thing of course is deciding what to do and where to go—but how wonderful to be so spoiled for choice!

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