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NEWFIE, EH...

Words by Mike Jones and Andreas Hestler.
Photos by Jordan Manley.

Sit back, slow down and savour Newfoundland
- home of epic landscapes, empty trails and
chewy dried fish.



Sun, sea and shred.

Generated by CamScanner

For many of us, our world has become increasingly busy, crowded and consumed with tasks and efforts focused on getting ahead and acquiring the 'stuff' that we think we need. It is hard to avoid thinking and acting this way. At times it can seem like our world is designed to breed dissatisfaction and unrest.

We are brought up believing that we need more and that we can do better. We can easily become overwhelmed by a world that is increasingly wired and complicated. While there are few things that seem to offer us an 'out' from this chatter of daily living, mountain biking offers a beautiful escape, a chance to quiet our minds and be present in our surroundings.

As modern humans many of us seek simplicity, beauty, natural landscapes and periods of calm. As mountain bikers we can find this every time we ride. Our bikes offer an escape to a type of reality and beauty that only the natural world can offer; a way to find time away from the busyness that we find in cities full of commerce, productivity, such screens, smart phones, commuting and consuming. It can seem like a never-ending race to get ahead and find happiness outside of

the natural world and outside of ourselves. Whenever we have the good fortune of a ride we have the luxury of escaping and gaining a fresh perspective.

Unwind and enjoy

Sit back, slow down and savour Newfoundland. The island and its neighbouring mainland province of Labrador are perched on the far eastern shores of Canada, on the opposite coast to the famous trails and places of British Columbia, nearly 6000km away. Western Newfoundland is uniquely underdeveloped. A place to unwind and enjoy the beauty and simplicity of the natural world, to find solitude and get in touch with old time values and the things in life that might just be more important than the TV news and the current stock market value.

Newfoundland has two major centres, Saint John's (population approximately 100,000) in the east and Corner Brook (population 25,000) in the west. We chose to explore the rugged west coast of the island, home to the world famous Gros Morne National Park and L'Anse aux Meadows where the Vikings landed in 1000AD, both UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

WHENEVER WE HAVE THE GOOD FORTUNE OF A RIDE WE HAVE THE LUXURY OF ESCAPING AND GAINING A FRESH PERSPECTIVE.



Fizzy drink colour schemes are so in this season.



It's there, but not as we know it.

Our journey leads us to a land in unconscious flux - between the old world and the new. Western Newfoundland seems to have escaped the booming development of the last 15 years: big box stores, Starbucks and the re-making of our cities by developers. It is a unique place and unlike any other that we had visited before. This is where people still don't lock their doors and leave their bikes outside at night, where everybody, whether artist, fisherman, mill worker, student, old or young, fondly greets each other and juke boxes still play at the roadside diner.

How do you like your ungletrack?

Upon arrival at the Deer Lake Airport we were greeted by our guide Shannon, who wasted no time in immediately shuttling us to our first ride. We headed up Massey Drive just east of Corner Brook where we rode out under the power lines for an easy warm up before heading into the ungletrack. Newfoundland is criss-crossed by hundreds of kilometres of double track and quad trails; this is due in part to the outflow enthusiasm of the locals and the large amount of hunting also done. We swooped and dove between a few trails and the double track before heading back to the trailhead and a cool swim in Tipping's Pond. After our ride we dined on the local fare: codfish with coleslaw and chips. Our choices were pan-fried or deep-fried and this was to become our main meal each day.

The varied terrain and vast fjords of Gros Morne National Park, coupled with the small fishing villages along the coastline were amazing and seemed to call out for us to explore them. While riding

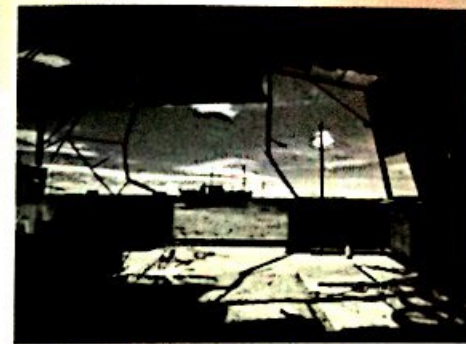
in the Trout River Pond area, we swept out along some singletrack staying close to the lakeshore and eventually climbed up to a view providing panoramas to both east and west. The barren landscape had sparse brush, no trees and felt like riding on the moon but was still so beautiful. We finished our ride again with a swim in the lake, something we were really enjoying at this time of the summer (August) in Newfoundland.

As the sun was slowly setting we headed back to the village of Trout River Pond and out onto the north headland. The rugged coastal landscape, the picturesque lighthouse and the uneven boardwalk made for an awe-inspiring end-of-day experience. The sunsets here were unbelievably slow and made for incredible photos; we seasoned the short trails above the village and the Atlantic and it was sheer magic.

After a full day of riding, we found ourselves bouncing around pubs and bars looking for the quintessential Newfoundland night-time experience. We finally found it: full of university students, a soccer team, many locals and a live band called the Navigators. The dance floor was nearly empty while the top 40 music played; we were ready to give up on the bar and the whole scene when out of the shadows emerged four musicians (the Navigators). They were equipped with fiddles, guitars and pipes and they proceeded to rock the house. The freshly packed dance floor hopped to the classic 'Newfie' jigs. There it was: the 'kids' were dancing to their roots and heritage, the 'old' style, the spirit, the beautiful music of Newfoundland.



Caged in.



Whatever your riding style there's something in that one foot.



WWTIP



Nom! Tr. no.

TO BE ACCEPTED INTO NEWFOUNDLAND AS A TRUE NEWFIE, ONE MUST GO THROUGH THIS PARTICULAR RITE OF PASSAGE, AND SO WE DID.

Time-travelling moose?

It's always hard to get going after a night on the town, but we were excited to head out on another adventure with some die-hard locals for a 'Bog' ride. Guided by two characters John French and 'Rotten' Ron, we didn't want to miss this. The route led us from Lady Slipper Road to Pinchard Lake and took us about four hours. John French, the 'French Adventurer' was known to get way out into the bush and had laid down many of the local epic routes. As is the case with mountain biking this was an amazing way to see the countryside, get a feel for the land that was so vastly different to yesterday's ride; it was almost another country. We traversed through forests, over logging roads, rivers and bogs, saw old cabins and abandoned trucks and felt somewhat taken back in time. Muddy, wet and tired we finished the day with a new appreciation for the hardiness of the people and wild lands of Newfoundland. Our experience was beginning to taste good.

Another day of riding took us to Gros Morne National Park and the Strackless Pond trail followed by the Killdavid trail. These routes are already recognised multi-use trails in the National Park and are a must-do if you are in this area, smooth flowing hill trails through a nice forest on the edge of a lake, all this while riding in a national park on a sanctioned trail. It's amazingly progressive and great to see

Parks Canada testing sanctioned riding within its boundaries. We had hoots and hollers aplenty and only wished there were more than the 14km we rode. Driving home at twilight we had to hit the brakes suddenly on a barren piece of highway as a young female moose ambled her way across the road. They are huge and impressive to behold; we managed to see five moose on three separate occasions.

Warm hearts, deep traditions - and dried fish

Our next cultural escapade involved the classic Newfoundland tradition of being 'Screeched In'. Newfies are known to talk funny, dress funny and eat funny, so we all think. To be accepted into Newfoundland as a true Newfie, one must go through this particular rite of passage, and so we did. This ceremony should only be done by a legitimate 'Screecher' - they are like a priest or a witch doctor and you don't want to take this lightly. It begins by dressing like a Newfie, so we put on yellow rain pants, hats and jackets. Then you must talk like a Newfie, this means saying something like "arn minnars" meaning "are there any fish there?". Next, eat like a Newfie (yikes! this was tough - we had to eat a caplin fish (like a dried chesny anchovy) and we nearly puked. Finally a shot of 'screech' or rum to wash it all down and we were part of the Newfie club.



It's pretty easy to follow the trail...



Rain riding.