

The Viking Trail

NEWFOUNDLAND

Taken from Canadian Geographic Travel Magazine, Winter 2017-2018, Wangursky, Russell (See article attachment with photo).

Not for the faint of heart, Newfoundland's Viking Trail is the spinal cord for the string of small towns dotted along the island's Great Northern Peninsula.

Route 430 winds north from Deer Lake, carrying goods to towns with names such as Sally's Cove and Quirpon (pronounced car-poon), and with an onshore wind in winter, snow can arrive at any moment.

If you really need to stretch your legs (and lungs), stop your transit of the trail in Gros Morne National Park, where there are 50 kilometres of groomed cross-country ski trails.

Refuel yourself back in Deer Lake or move on to Norris Point or Rocky Harbour; all three towns traditionally stagger their winter carnivals from mid-February through to early March, and if your timing is good, moose soup, chili, meatballs and shepherd's pie could be on the menu.

And not just on the menu. Moose (and caribou, closer to the northern end of the route) are a common sight. With the former frequent enough to be a serious road hazard for the unwary.

Sights on this portion of the trail include the small, bright huddle of shoreline houses on open ground in Green Island Cove, the Flower's Cove lighthouse (which is so tantalizingly close it appears you can almost touch it, but it is actually ensconced on a small harbour island) and, near the top the top of the peninsula, the sheltered bowl of St. Anthony Harbour.

And finally, if you can make it, Burnt Cape, a limestone cape of broken stone so barren and windswept you would swear you had turned north and found the artic.

DISTANCE: 418 kilometres

DON'T MISS: A detour down Route 431, which will bring you to the Tablelands. In winter sun, it's a sight so stark you'll shiver no matter how well dressed you are.

SOUNDTRACK: The albums Honey for Bees or Sun Gets in Your Eyes, both by western Newfoundland's Sherman Downey and the Ambiguous Case.



Visitors snowshoe in Gros Morne National Park in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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—Russell Wangersky



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