



*The Beautiful
Isles Of
Magdalene*

Hello there,

Welcome to the Magdalen Islands. We think you're in for a treat. Island hospitality and the warmth of the summer sun go hand in hand here. This small group of islands is only 100 km. or so from tip to tip as the crow flies, yet there are many sights to see, and friendly places to stay when you visit here. Driving is easy and distances are short, and the sight of the red cliffs, green hills and blue sea are infinitely soothing.

A ferry operates daily between Souris, P.E.I. and the islands. Daily flights connect the islands to P.E.I. and Quebec, and points beyond.

Red cliffs, white sand, green hills, blue sky and water—it is little wonder that visitors think of the islands as colourful. But we are colourful in another way too. There is a story behind every person you meet and every place you see. A few of these tales are told in this guide and we hope you'll discover some of the history and more of our legends as you come to know us better.

When you're surrounded by famous white beaches as we are, most summer activities center around the salt water. There is swimming, sunning, and windsurfing, just to mention a few. There are also family and group excursions to Brion Island, Bird Island and Entry Island.

The islands are a paradise for birdwatchers: petrels, cormorants, gannets, razor bills, mures, gulls and others abound.

If you enjoy bicycling, the bicycle is recommended as a means of transportation to vacationers who really want to soak up the glorious local colour.

No seafood is better than that from the islands. As for the delectable island lobster, in season from May 10 - July 10, it is even better tasting when eaten outdoors. Why not consider a lobster picnic on the beach?

Jacques Cartier first visited the islands in 1534. On his return visit in 1536 he named the islands "Les Araynes" (from Latin-Arena), which signifies sand. The Magdalen Islands lost this name given by Jacques Cartier, in the course of the 15 years following his voyage. Fishermen who frequented the islands, probably the Malouins from Brittany (like Jacques Cartier himself), renamed the islands "Les Rames" - Green Arbours, without doubt referring to the topography of the sand dunes joining the islands. This name did not last.

The name Magdalen was bestowed in honour of Madeleine Lafontaine, wife of the islands first seigniorial lord.

The languages spoken by the Madelinots have a colourful history. One language is an Acadian variety of 17th century French. The anglophone Madelinots speak with a cadence often reminiscent of Scotland and Ireland. These languages have evolved in isolation for nearly three centuries and are liberally salted with nautical terms. The lilting and melodious language is a pleasure to hear.

The Acadian and Scottish/Irish descendants have always lived side by side, no animosity darkens the history of these two communities. Didn't the two speak the same language? That of the sea!





Fourteen thousand people live in this isolated, enchanted decor, scattered throughout the seven inhabited islands. Amherst, Grindstone, House Harbour, Point-aux-Loups, Grosse Isle and Grand Entry are joined by long sand dunes and bridges. Entry Island is the only inhabited island not joined to the main islands. Other islets and reefs are sanctuary to thousands of birds.

The Magdalen Islands have a gentle maritime climate. Heated by the Gulf Stream, the waters attain 17 degrees celsius during the course of the summer. The wind, which gives you a feeling of freedom, makes the islands a paradise for amateur sailors.

The economy of the Magdalen Islands is traditionally based on fishing. Many Madelinots still make their living from the sea, or from the transformation of its products. Lobster fished from May to July on the rocky marine bottom makes the islands famous. Some other species (scallops, mackerel, snow crab, cod, herring, sole, flounder, etc.), are fished in season.

Tourism and the exploitation of salt have added to the economy of the islands. Agriculture is rendered difficult because of the division of the land.

SHIPWRECKS

The Magdalen Islands have acquired a reputation rivaling Sable Island as a marine disaster area. Some estimates put the number at 600, but precisely how many ships have been wrecked here is uncertain.

The death toll mounts to thousands; were all the ghosts to haunt these isles, what a confusion of race and tongue would reign.

Though the islands have witnessed many wrecks with terrible loss of life, other wrecks have often brought additional settlers and other unexpected bounty in form of supplies and goods.

Adventurers in increasing numbers are diving and digging for buried treasure, but thus far they've brought up more rusty propellers and portholes than gold or silver. The thrill of the hunt makes their experience memorable.



AROUND THE ISLANDS

How can one be bored in the Magdalen Islands? As soon as you arrive, the islanders welcome you warmly, and they are easy to get to know. Their ancestry is evident in their gentle speech. As you walk, drive, or bike around the islands, cast your eyes on the architecture and fragile cliffs.

Now we would like to take you on a short visit to all the municipalites on the islands.

The major town and capital is Grindstone, through which the islands are provisioned. The large cargoes have made it a seaport, the fishing boats a fishing port, and the sailing boats a pleasure port. A modern church, a handicraft co-op for the islands artisans, a tourist bureau, the islands' only hospital, and also a modern shopping area are to be found here.

From Grindstone we will go on to visit Laverniere, where a very beautiful old wooden church welcomes visitors. Golf enthusiasts will enjoy the nine hole course in Laverniere.

The Butte du Vente (Wind Hill) of Fatima offers a most imposing view of the islands, even as far as Cape Breton, N.S. Fatima also boasts of a cinema and a drive-in movie, the only one in the islands.

At Etang-du-Nord there is a little fishing port and two tiny villages, Laverniere and Boisville. The most forested part of the islands is found in this area.

Travelling west, we arrive on Amherst Island which boasts two modern churches, one in the bassin, the other in the village of Amherst, the "Demoiselles Hill" with its panorama and cross, and the Millerand wharf, The Museum of the Sea at Amherst, with the theme "Man of the Sea", recalling the evolution of fishing and navigation in the islands, displays period pieces and historical works, shipwreck maps, and a model of the original "La Grave" Madelinot village, must be included in our itinerary.

In House Harbour we take a tour of another kind. We will stop along the highway of South Beach, walk along the cliffs as far as Butte Ronde, and we will see formations of gypsum of a colour you will find no where else. This part of our tour can end with a picnic on Butte Ronde, which offers an exceptional view.

And now we will go to Pointe-aux-Loups, a part of the municipality of House Harbour, where you can buy the most delicious clams, and swim along the beautiful shores or just sunbathe. After our picnic we will continue along Route 199 to Grosse Isle.

An Anglophone community, Grosse Isle has two little wooden churches, one in Grosse Isle, the other in Old Harry. The first anglican church in the islands was built in Grosse Isle in 1850.

The cliffs just to the north of Grosse Isle offer you beautiful footpaths of red and gray sandstone and clay. We will be able to observe a fragile cliff literally collapsing from the action of powerful waves. Here you will also find a fishing port where it may be possible to hire a boat to go to Brion Island.

This uninhabited island is situated about 15 km. from Grosse Isle, and saw its last inhabitants leave in 1953, and is now visited by fishermen and their families and tourists. Another islet belonging to the municipality of Grosse Isle is Bird Rock. Situated about 65 km. northeast of the main island, this special isle has only one resident — the lighthouse keeper. The most beautiful birds on the archipelago have chosen it for their home port.

Back in Grosse Isle, we leave the wharf and continue along Route 199 to East Cape and Old Harry, still in the Municipality of Grosse Isle. Sand dunes and beaches stretch for about 7 km. from East Point to Old Harry Head. East Point and Cape Pialleur provide breathtaking observation posts for bird-watchers. A small fishing port enables one to buy, or if adventurous, catch one's fresh lunch. (fish)

It is on the beach of Old Harry that we can visit the cross that was erected in 1969 in memory of the "Miracle" disaster and of all the fishermen who have lost their lives in these waters. It is a long walk to the cross, so take your lunch and plan a full day of walking, swimming, and sunning. (about 10 km.)

Before leaving Grosse Isle, we must stop at Cape Dauphin; from here we will have a most magnificent view of both East Point Beach and North Beach.

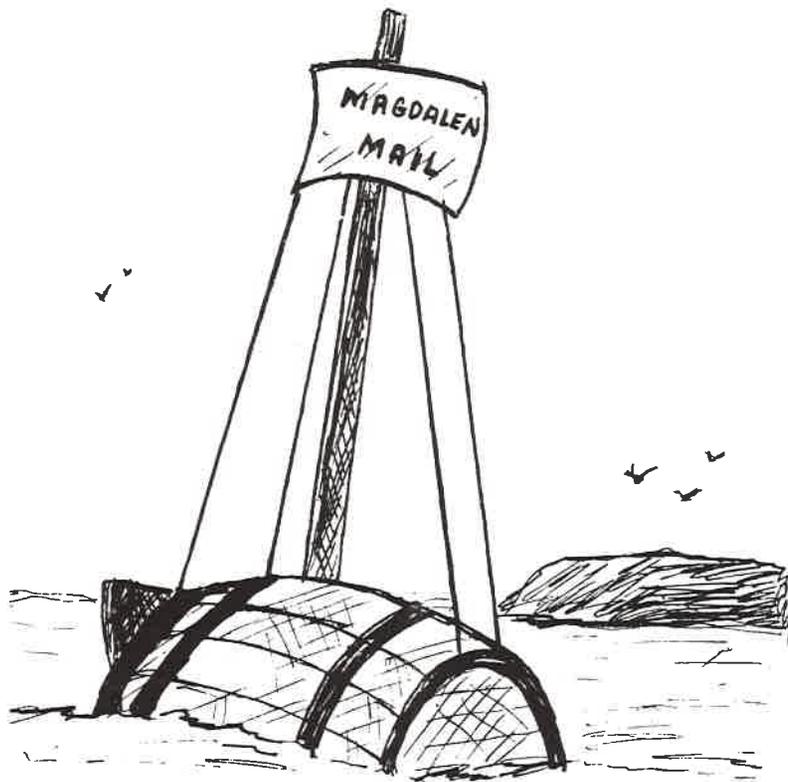
Again following highway 199 east, we arrive in Grand Entry. Here, as is the case elsewhere in the islands, the main topic is fishing. Situated on the far end of the archipelago, Grand Entry has a fishing port, a processing plant for herring, lobster, cod and mackerel, depending on the season. Observation posts for birdwatching are found along Clarke Road and at Oyster Basin.

Your stay in the Magdalens would not be complete without a visit to Entry Island, the only inhabited island not joined to the others. The residents, of Scottish descent, live in semi-isolation and the English spoken is often reminiscent of their ancestry. A passenger boat leaves Amherst for Entry Island each morning at 8:00 a.m. and returns at 4:00 p.m.

Climb the highest summit on the island for a grand panorama of the Magdalens — the "Butte d'Ile" or St Lawrence Hill. (Big Hill as it is known to the islanders). Random walks on the footpaths circling the island, the lighthouse, impressive red cliffs and rocks are but a few things to see and do on this friendly and beautiful island.

We have given you a brief visit to the main islands, so after you have made your own tour, why not take time yourself, to visit the smaller islands, such as Seal Island, Red Island, Deadman's Island, and Bassin Island, to mention but a few.





In the winter of 1910, stranded without any means of communications with the mainland, the residents of the Magdalen Islands sent out some mail and an urgent request for help in a molasses barrel (puncheon). This was found in Cape Breton Island, N.S. The Federal Government reacted swiftly and the icebreaker Stanley was promptly sent to the rescue. Though used only once, the puncheon became famous in Island history; models of it are sold to this day, to tourists throughout the islands.

The story of Farmer, the ocean going horse of Entry Island, is well known in the Magdalen Islands. In March of 1925, Farmer was traded by his owner, Richard McLean, who took the horse over the ice to Amherst Island three miles away. He then drove the horse across Amherst Island, up along Grindstone, Pointe-aux-Loups, and Grosse Isle, where he delivered him to his new owner. Farmer became homesick, and in June galloped back the route he had travelled, swam the three miles to Entry Island, and reported to his old owner. He had come more than fifty-five miles under strange conditions, but he had accomplished his purpose. Richard McLean allowed Farmer to stay on Entry Island for the rest of his life. And, not unlike Farmer, many former Magdalen Islanders return home again and again.



THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS "SNOWMAN" - A True Story

On Sunday, November 22, 1871 the Magdalen Islands were hit by a terrible blizzard. No one could leave their homes until the storm abated on Thursday.

On that day, two youths in Pointe-aux-Loups found the wreckage of a ship scattered at the foot of the cliffs, beyond the high tide mark. For several hours they gathered salvage from the wreckage. At dark they lit flares and started homeward. As they passed a large mass of wreckage a gigantic creature, eight feet tall and snow white, emerged from behind it. Dropping everything, the boys fled for home.

The next morning the storm returned in full force, but abated by afternoon. About twenty men went down to the shore where the disaster had taken place. Few of them paid any attention to the strange story of the two boys, dismissing the huge creature as a giant white owl or polar bear which had come in on an ice flow.

All day long the men salvaged from the wreck they found to be the "S.S. Wasp". When night fell, they lit their flares and began their homeward journey. As they passed a hay barn, an enormous white shape, eight feet in height reared up at them from out of the snow drifts, and slowly advanced. The creature was so terrifying that every man dropped what he was carrying and ran as fast as he could for home, screaming with terror.

They told their story to Father Charles Boudreault, who tried to comfort them. He promised to accompany them to the scene the next day.

Early the next morning, Father Boudreault and a dozen men, each armed with a gun, set out for the haybarn. The others stayed home to protect their wives — or so they claimed. They found no evidence in the morning, and in the afternoon walked to the scene of the wreck, and again to the haybarn.

In the meadow behind the barn, Father Boudreault found footprints twenty-two inches long and twelve inches wide,

which they followed and found to be those of a two-legged creature. On and on Father Boudreault led the others, all with their guns ready to shoot the creature — ghost, giant, or polar bear, whatever it might be. Then, far in the distance they saw a huge form lying on its side on the beach. The men lit their flares and Father Boudreault advanced alone. On reaching the form, he touched it, and encountered frozen snow. He walked around the huge creature, and found it to be more than nine feet in girth and almost eight feet long, with a head almost four feet wide and three feet long!

The creature was carried into a house, and from within the fantastic shape emerged a man six feet eight in height, and weighing no less than 310 lbs! It was his enormous physique that saved him. He was found to be August LeBordais, the first mate of the "S.S. Wasp", and the only survivor. He had clung for a full day and night to a piece of wreckage in the sea and had eaten nothing for days but snow. That Auguste LeBordais did not perish during his long exposure is rather short of miraculous.

LeBordais' sufferings were terrible as his limbs began to thaw. A week after his rescue, the islanders realized that his legs would have to be amputated, and it took 10 men to hold him. But he lived!

When the ice flows melted at the end of May 1872, LeBordais was taken to Quebec for another operation. He was fitted with peg legs. Returning to the Magdalen Islands, he eventually founded the government office there, at Grosse Isle. Even with peg legs he could stand up against anyone in a fight!

(N.B. — The government office he founded was the first telegraph office in the Magdalen Islands.)

passed down by word of mouth, generation to generation

One winter two men, Paul Chennell and Rubin Welsh, set out in a fishing boat off the Magdalens, and a gale of wind blew them out to sea. Then a change of wind again blew them into the mouth of Grand Entry Harbour. There they became trapped in the ice.

Two other men, Alan Clarke and Jack Keaton, went out on the thin ice in an attempt to save them. Clarke advanced further than Jack Keaton, crawling along the jagged pack ice, with two dory oars and a rope.

Finally he reached the boat, drove a line through the painter, and hauled the two men almost to shore. Then Jack Keaton and others hitched a horse to the boat and pulled it high on the beach. Clark had been struggling on the broken ice continuously for almost eight hours, and his clothes were frozen stiff. He collapsed after the others were saved.

For this daring rescue, the Canadian Humane Society awarded Alan Clarke and Jack Keaton with a beautiful bronze medal.

THE "MIRACLE"

The wreck of the "Miracle" in 1847 was a fireside topic for many years.

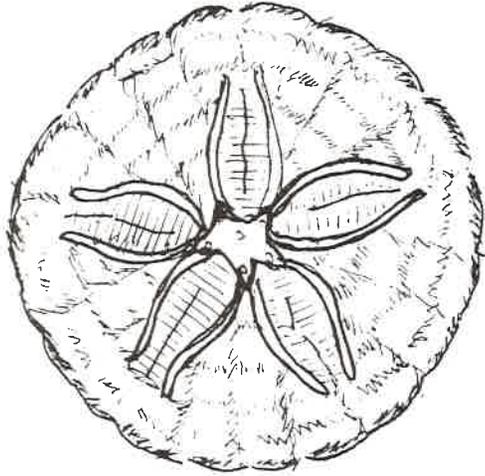
The "Miracle" was a full-rigged Irish immigrant ship sailing from Liverpool to Quebec with approximately 400 immigrants aboard, which floundered in a storm off East Point, on the night of May 19, 1847, with dysentery, some 150 people died, at least half by exposure, rather than by drowning. The surviving people were taken in by the people of East Island and shared their provisions.

The recovered bodies were buried in a common grave, which is now shadowed by a cross erected on July 6, 1969 in memory of the "Miracle" disaster and of all fishermen and seamen who lost their lives in these waters.



A Madelinot invention! These cleverly designed structures without walls consisting of four poles and sliding roofs, are used to store and shelter hay. Since less and less hay is being cut here today, these shacks are being relegated to folk history.

THE "MAGDALEN ISLAND SAND DOLLAR"



The markings on this shell symbolize the Birth, Crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, and is sometimes called the Holy Ghost Shell. On the top side of the shell can be seen the Easter Lily, and in the center, a five pointed star representing the Star of Bethlehem. Reversing the shell, the outlines of a Poinsetta appear. When we open the sand dollar we find inside five little birds called the Doves of Peace.



ACCESS TO MAGDALEN ISLANDS

BY AIR — Three airlines provide daily service between the Magdalen Islands and the mainland.

Eastern Provincial Airways: Daily services to Montreal and points west via Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Phone

(418) 986 - 5323 (800) 361 - 0245

Quebecair: Twice daily from Montreal, Gaspé, Mont - Joli and Seven Islands.

Phone

(418) 986 - 5366 (800) 361 - 0200

Taxi Aerien Aero Bonaventure: From Bonaventure for information and reservations.

Phone

(418) 534 - 3326 (418) 986 - 4224

BY SEA— The "Lucy Maud Montgomery" leaves Souris, P.E.I. every day except Tuesday during the tourist season.

Departure: Souris, P.E.I. at 14:00

Arrival: Cap-aux-Meules at 19:00

Departure: Cap-aux-Meules at 8:00

Arrival: Souris, P.E.I. at 1:00

Phone

(418) 986 - 2214 (418) 986 - 4264

(902) 687 - 2181

The Cargo Ship "Le Madeleine" leaves from Montreal and makes one round trip per week. Reservations must be made. Phone:

(418) 986 - 4224 (514) 871 - 1686

N.B. — For excursions around the islands and for chartered trips to the mainland you can call:

Icarus Flying Service 986 - 3077

Le Tony Excursions 986 - 2304

969 - 2790

for fishing excursions or trips to Entry Island.

ACCOMODATIONS

Hotels:

The Magdalen Islands offer a network of lodgings; one can choose from ten hotels and motels, concentrated for most part in Cap-aux-Meules and Havrev-aux-Maisons.

Rooms and Cottages:

The legendary hospitality of the Magdalen Islands is evident when they open their doors wide to accomodate visitors; for information contact the Tourist Information Office at Cap-aux-Meules.

Phone

(418) 986 - 2245

(418) 986 - 4251

Campgrounds:

There are four camping areas all located in exceptional areas adjacent to beautiful sand beaches.

For more information and directions call the Tourist Information Center, Cap-aux-Meules.. (418) 986 - 2245

Or write: Commission de Developpement Touristiques
des Iles-de-la-Madeleine

P.O. Box 238, Cap-aux-Meules

Magdalen Islands

Dining:

Many excellent restaurants are to be found, and naturally, seafood prepared in accordance with traditional island recipes predominates. One can also savour fresh lobster, which to hear many say, is the best in the world. Panfried cod, mackerel, and halibut are also real treats.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1. Word of mouth. (from Madelinots)
2. Industrie Quebec Tourism.
3. Prenez L'tour Du Quebec.
4. Le Paysage Architectural Traditional.
5. Les Iles-de-la-Madeleine: by Pierre Rastoul
and Gilles Rousseau.